A DISCOURSE OF Christianity:

Laying Open
The *Abuses* thereof in the *ANTI-CHRISTIAN LIVES* and *WORSHIP* of many of its *Professors*; *Especially, the*

ROMANISTS;

AND
Shewing the WAY to a HOLY LIFE in the CHARACTER of a

True Christian.

Written Originally in French *by the Famous Monsieur* de Gombaud.

And now done into English *by* P. Lorrain.

LONDON,
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IMPRIMATUR.

October 14. 1692.

Ra. Barker R. in Christo Patri ac D. Dom. Johan. Arch. a Sacris Dom.

A

2328.

To the Right Honourable WILLIAM *Earl of* DEVONSHIRE, *Baron* Hardwick, *Lord Lieutenant of the Counties of* Derby *and* Nottingham, *Lord Steward of* HIS MAJESTY's *Houſhold, Knight of the Moſt Noble Order of the* Garter, *and One of* THEIR MAJESTIES *Moſt Honourable Privy Council.*

May it pleaſe YOUR LORDSHIP,

HAving no other way publickly to expreſs my grateful Senſe of the

deep Obligations, laid by YOUR LORDSHIP upon my Family, and in particular upon my ſelf, I am prompted to do it by this *Dedication.* Wherein yet I dare not undertake (as it is uſual on ſuch Occaſions) to delineate YOUR LORDSHIP's High Character, and (though perhaps I might do it without ſuſpicion of Flattery) fall upon the *Encomium* of Your Noble Virtues, and Eminent Actions; partly, becauſe they are ſo univerſally known already to the World, as not to need the Pen of any

Pane-

Panegyrist, much leſs ſuch an one as mine, who reckon my ſelf inſufficient for ſo great a Task; And partly, becauſe I believe YOUR LORDSHIP would not like the Way that is ſo common and ſo much abus'd. Only I hope it may not be thought below YOUR GRANDEUR to patronize this little Piece (at leaſt for the *Subject*, and the *Author*'s ſake) and to bear with what faults Your Judicious Eye ſhall find in the *Tranſlator*, who humbly begs Pardon for this preſumption, and accounts it a great Honour

to

The Epiſtle,&c.

to be known and own'd by
YOUR LORDSHIP, as

MY LORD,

YOUR LORDSHIP's

Moſt Humbly Devoted

and

Moſt Obedient Servant,

PAUL LORRAIN.

THE TRANSLATOR TO THE READER.

THough it would be superfluous to offer any thing in Commendation of this small TREATISE, to such as have read it in its Native Language, or been acquainted with the Worth of its Author, Monsieur de GOMBAUD: Yet forasmuch as there are but few among us, to whom either the Book, or Author is known, I cannot but think it fit, that the rest should have some brief Account both of the One and of the Other; which when

I have given, may (I hope) be sufficient to bespeak their attentive Perusal *of it.*

1. *As to the* BOOK; *it treats of the most important and necessary (though withal the most neglected)* Subject *of any other,* viz. *TRUE RELIGION. And here, as on the one hand, you will find it represented to us in its Primitive* Beauty, *and (if I may so say)* Genuine Complexion, *that must needs render it amiable to sincere* Souls, *and inflame them with Devout Affections towards it: So on the other hand, you will see delineated its* State *of* Apostacie, *in the Depravation of its* Worship *and* Manners, *wherewith it has been imbased, adulterated and disguis'd, to that degree, that in many Places where it is profess'd, there is little else to be found remaining, besides the bare* Name *of it.*

The sad Consideration whereof may well draw tears from the Eyes, and

Sighs

Sighs from the Hearts of all good Chriſtians, *and make them take up the Lamentation of the* Holy *Prophet*; How is the Goid become dim! How is the moſt fine Gold changed! *and put them upon haſt'ning out of* BABYLON, which is become the habitation of Devils, the hold of all foul Spirits, and the Cage of every unclean Bird. *Well may it ſtir them up to call mightily upon God*, and give him no reſt, till he eſtabliſh and make *Jeruſalem* a Praiſe in the whole Earth; till he build up again the Tabernacle of *David* that is fallen down, and bring forth thoſe Times of Refreſhment, and of the Reſtitution of all things, which he has ſpoken of by the Mouth of all his Holy Prophets ſince the World began.

Nor ſhould ſuch earneſt Prayers *be unaccompanied with as earneſt* Endeavours *to make way for that deſirable* Refor-

Reformation *in the* Church *and* Renew'd *State of* Religion, *by doing our best (every one in his respective Station and Calling) for the Removal of those Corruptions that so notoriously obstruct it.*

These appear to have been the main Ends *of* Monsieur de GOMBAUD's *exposing here the mischievous* Abuses *and* Errors *long since crept-in among* CHRISTIANS, *and now so predominant (especially) in the CHURCH of ROME, whose False* Worship *and Bloody* Tenets, *with the* Pride *and* Covetousness, *the* Juggling *and foul* Practices *of their* Clergy, *his* DISCOURSE *seems to be chiefly level'd at.*

2. *As to the* AUTHOR's Character *and* History, *I shall only say in short, what is necessary for the* READER's *Satisfaction, That he was a Person of great Virtue and Learning, born and bred in the* Roman *Communion.*

munion. *But by Divine Illumination, assisting his serious Study and impartial Examining of the Chief* Points *controverted between us, his Eyes were opened to see the gross* Errors *of that* Church, *which he thereupon quitted, and embraced the* REFORMATION; *persevering therein constant to the end, notwithstanding the many* Temptations *he met with to draw him back, for above half an Age together; during which time he liv'd in the Court of* France, *under the Reigns of no less than* three *several Kings, viz.* Henry IV, Lewis XIII, *and* Lewis XIV; *and was there (if not by all, at least by the* Judicious) *highly respected and esteem'd for his great* Genius, *and other rare Endowments of his* Mind: *Of which he has in* this Treatise (*among other his choice* Works) *given such an* Instance, *as bespeak him to be a very extraordinary Person.*

Now

Now, since Originals (*especially Excellent ones*) *are accounted generally to lose somewhat of Spirit by* Translations; *I hope allowance may be granted to this of mine, if it come not up to the Grace and Force of* Monsieur de GOMBAUD's *Expression; who has a* Style *peculiar to himself, not easie for any to imitate. But setting this aside, I may presume to say, I have render'd him faithfully; so that, whoever shall take the pains to read this Translation, may enjoy the whole* Sense *of the* AUTHOR, *though, perhaps, in a less taking and Ornamental* Dress. *However, such as it is, I doubt not but the* CHRISTIAN READER *will meet with* THAT *in it, will abundantly recompence him for the time he shall spend in the perusing of it; by filling his Heart with a lively Sense of the transcendent Excellence of our Most* HOLY RELIGION, *which* Monsieur de GOMBAUD *appears to have been so strongly affected and inflamed with, in the Writing of this* Discourse. *But I stop here; as being unwilling to keep the* READER *any longer from that Edifying* Entertainment *here prepared for him.* FAREWEL.

A DISCOURSE OF THE Christian Religion.

CHAP. I.

I. SINCE I have begun to make use of my Reason and Understanding, I have a thousand times reflected upon the Beauty of this Universe, the Order of its Parts, the mutual Services they lend one another, and the Eternal Laws they

obſerve. A thouſand times, I ſay, have I conſider'd all theſe Wonders, and the cuſtom of ſeeing them has not leſſen'd my admiration of them. I have taken notice that all this great *World* is nothing elſe but a *Viſible Word*, that proves a GOD ſo evidently, that in compariſon of it all our Eloquence and Rhetorick is dumb, or at beſt ſo obſcure and inconſiſtent with it ſelf, that the more it endeavours on this account, the more it ſeems to hide what it would demonſtrate. I have ſeen that all things in Nature conſtantly perform their reſpective Functions, and anſwer the end and perfection of their Creation, MAN only excepted, who has from the beginning taken part with the Devils and Enemies of GOD, by offending him with ſo much ingratitude, who had beſtow'd ſo many Favours upon him, and made

him

him such as it was possible for him to be, without being God, but an Image of Him. As the first conception of his Mind was a Fancy of Pride and Vain-glory, so the first Production of his Body was a *Cain*, a Murtherer of his Brother, and all the Children he has brought into the World have inherited his Rashness, and Rebellion, and consequently his Condemnation and Punishment. I have considered Men in general, and perceived, that some of them were of the Nature of Devils, others of Beasts, and many of both together; that their hands were full of Blood, Extortions, Violence, and Rapine; In short, that their whole Exercise was nothing else but a kind of Monopoly and Robbery.

II. Then was I seized with a secret horror and grief, which like a shadow of Death, brought a

Cloud upon the faireſt days of my Life. Nothing could comfort me, neither the conſideration that God had made me a Man, nor that I was one of thoſe that bear the Name of *Chriſtians*, ſeeing they were at variance together, and that Ignorance and Malice were as common amongſt them, as with *Barbarians* and *Infidels*. Nothing was more contrary to me, than thoſe I thought like my ſelf, and I was reduced to this neceſſity, either to make my ſelf odious to all by an Everlaſting Contradiction, or to follow their Examples; and thereby be in ſome ſort, an Accomplice with them in their deceit and unfaithfulneſs. In the mean time I obſerve that the ſame accidents equally ſurpriz'd both Old and Young, and I could not perſwade my ſelf, that Rational Beings could feel any true Content,

tent, in so great an Uncertainty of what must happen to them. My Reason it self, and all the Reflections it enabled me to make, did but serve to increase my sorrow, till I carefully and seriously considered the *Divine Oracles* of the most ancient Writings, which assured me, that God had reserved some to himself who bore *a Mark in their Foreheads*; which the Angels respect, and whom the Destroyer doth not approach in the Day of Vengeance; That this World was nothing else but a Place of Tryal to discern the *Good* from the *Bad*, and a *Way* by which we are to pass through *Darkness* to *Light*, and from *Misery* to *Felicity*: Words I should have heard with more fear than assurance, seeing there were so few that could or would mind them; if they themselves had not taught me, that

Shepheards and *Fishermen* do much better understand them, than the *Disputers of this World*, and *Philosophers*; and that for the true comprehending of them, there is not so much need of *Logick*, as of *Faith* and *Piety*. That they teach a Science that does not puff Men up, but makes them humble, and yet gives the most Humble and Lowly courage enough to profess it openly before the Proudest and Greatest Men in the World, and every day to venture their own Lives in the attempt of saving of others from Death.

III. All these Divine Revelations, being accompanied with a Spirit of Comfort have calmed my Soul, and I have found my self, as it were, renew'd and transformed on a sudden, in such a manner, that though my former grief has not quite left me, at least its nature is changed

changed, and has now no other cause but my Sins and Infirmities. And if still I entertain any fears, they are such as serve only to assure me the more, and make me press with greater eagerness *towards the Mark*, which *Hope* and *Faith* have set before me. In this I rejoyce, not as for some transitory Oblectation, which nothing can satisfie, and which at its full finds a want of many things; but as for an all-sufficient and permanent Good, which increaseth by Communication, and which I may be very liberal of without the least diminishing of it. This is that makes me now freely offer what I have received, and to joyn my desires with those of such Faithful Souls as Providence has sown and mix'd with others, to the end that the Voice of Truth may be heard every where, and leave them with-

out excuſe, who having heard ſhall not believe, or who being Traitors to themſelves for ſome Worldly Conſiderations ſhall fear to know it, leſt thereby they ſhould be obliged to follow it. The Days are coming when thoſe very Men will perhaps accuſe us for our not having ſaid enough to them, and for our Cowardiſe in not reproving of them, and will endeavour to charge their wilful Ignorance and hardneſs of Heart upon our weakneſs or neglect. And yet, we no ſooner open our Mouths that way, but ſome ſay they pity us, or will laugh at and deſpiſe us, and the moſt favourable uſage we receive from them, is to be looked upon as ſilly and extravagant Fellows. Others grow angry with us, and are ready to tear us in pieces, revile us and take us for *Hereticks* and *Evil-doers*, though our Crime be of ſuch

such a nature as that we desire no better than to have our Judges fully informed of it, and own it before all the World.

IV. But to whom shall we speak? *Idolaters* will never understand us. All the *Prophets* have denounced a Curse against them, which takes away their Understanding, and makes them like that they Worship. Neither will we be understood by weak Minds, and destitute of Judgment; for such cannot apprehend any thing, being more apt to be troubled, than instructed; and if they be Wicked, they are offended to hear Words, that Condemn them. And these are by so much the more dangerous, as they are more Witty and Learned; They do nothing but use tricks, and wrest both Words and Sense. The cleareſt Propositions when they please become dark and doubtful;

they can prove and deny every thing alike, and by a juſt Judgment for their not being willing to underſtand the Truth they are grown ſuch miſerable wretches, as not to be able to underſtand themſelves; they are ſo given up to the ſtudy of things ſuperfluous, that they have loſt the Care of thoſe that are neceſſary; an Humane Science which they have made the Judge of that which is Divine, hath render'd them worſe, than if they were altogether ignorant. Beſides, as Men will not be eaſily perſwaded of that which they don't like, ſo methinks I hear the Wiſe Men and Courtiers of this Age cry, *Pray tell us things pleaſing to us, and be not wiſer than the Church.* They will be no better than their Fathers, nor follow other Cuſtoms, than thoſe of their Town and Country; the Eſtates

they

they there poſſeſs, or rather, which poſſeſs them, not permitting them ſo much as to think of applying themſelves to a Profeſſion, that might in the leaſt be prejudicial to them; and they will have God and Religion to buckle to their Intereſts, let it coſt what it will. *How is it poſſible* (ſay they) *not to live after the way and mode of the World, or to have different Opinions from theirs that are in poſſeſſion of Chairs and Pulpits, and of the Doctrine in vogue, to oppoſe the Belief of People, Magiſtrates, and Princes, and to expoſe ones ſelf to the Cenſure and Contradiction of all?* Thus to ſpeak of Reformation, is to be a troubleſome Fellow, a Fanatick, and what not: Yea Licentiouſneſs is grown to that degree, that it cannot abide good and wholeſom Remedies. Piety is almoſt wholly turn'd to Superſtition; and look which way you

you will, you'll find that Corruption is ſo great, that there is need not only of a *Flood* to waſh the Earth, but of an Univerſal *Conflagration* to conſume it.

V. To what purpoſe then is ſo much talk? And what Illuſtration or new face ſhall we give to ſo many old Inſtructions, which are always new, becauſe always neceſſary? If a *Summary* of ſome few *Articles*, a ſhort *Catechiſm*, a *Confeſſion* of *Faith* ſhould not be thought ſufficient to make the beſt *Chriſtians* in the World, yet is there any thing of Man's Duty omitted in either *Teſtament*? Nevertheleſs, ſince he that puts his *Word* into our *Hearts*, will have it alſo in our *Mouths*, to the end, that *being converted we may alſo labour for the Converſion of our Brethren*, let us not hold our peace when there is ſo great need of our ſpeaking, or at leaſt,

leaſt, let us (if poſſible) write ſuch things as Men may not ſcorn to read. But take we great heed of imitating thoſe Ambitious Writers who ſeek for Reputation from the Number or Bulk of their Volumes, wherewith they over-load Men's minds, not conſidering that this multiplicity of Words intimates nothing more than the difficulty they have to apprehend rightly, or incapacity to expreſs fully what they would ſay. Let us ſpeak therefore in ſpite of all oppoſition and gainſaying, *to try whether we can ſave ſome by fear, plucking them, as it were, out of the Fire,* Jude 23. and ſee whether God will not open the heart of ſome *Naaman* among Men, 2 *Kings*, 5. 15. and of ſome *Lydia* among Women, *Acts* 16. 14.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

VI. I Have consider'd that those Holy Men, who were the first Pen-men of Holy Writ, and taught us the Laws of Living well, and the Way to Salvation, did not trouble themselves to find out Arguments, or give any express Demonstration in proof of a Deity; as not imagining we could be Rational Creatures, and doubt of so evident a Truth. Indeed we must confess that every thing does in its own Language so loudly proclaim the same, that this vast Universe seem to be nothing else but a great Body, which God is pleased to make use of to render himself visible, who of his own Nature is Invisible. Besides, the Natural Notions we have of certain Principles that make us discern

cern between Good and Evil; the Terrors of Conscience, those Discourses of Reason, that carry us so far above our own selves, that diligent search after a supreme Good, and the desire of Perfection and Immortality, render him much more sensible to our Mind, than he is to our Eyes. Therefore, whether we enter into our selves, or look abroad, we meet with him every where, and the sense of him is so Universal, that it must needs proceed from Nature, and they who have it not, proclaim themselves Monsters and Unnatural. For a Man to deny a God and his Providence (say the Wise and Judicious) is to be Deaf to his own Voice, and as it were, a Stranger to himself.

VII. Nevertheless, some Men there are in the World who enjoy the sweetness of Light and Life, and

and yet for all that do not acknowledge the Author of them, or if they do so in appearance, 'tis only to avoid the Name of *Atheists*. Men that accommodate themselves to all manner of Religions, because they have none, and can either drop or caress them, according as they may be serviceable or prejudicial to their Worldly Interests and Pleasures. They will allow no Laws but what their Lusts prescribe, and the Justest always seem the most Cruel to them; the Name of a Deity either offends them, or moves them not at all. They, as far as in them lies, would destroy him, who gave them their Being, and sooth themselves into an unbelief of That, which if they believed they would be obliged both to reverence and fear. Their Libertine humour never gives leave to inform themselves; and

and certainly they never read at all, or if they do, it is without Meditation; and if they Meditate, being naturally Wicked, they turn every thing to their own nature; and yet forsooth they must pass for Wits and Men of Parts, and think themselves, Head and Shoulders, above others, when from some infamous Sophister they have pick'd up two or three false Arguments for their detestable Opinion, which they insolently extol before the Ignorant, or in the Company of Profane Wretches like themselves. But these set aside, they are fain to be silent; or if they speak, it is only to shew themselves meer *Ignorants*, in that they are always asking Questions without answering any. And it grieves me to say, that many Princes and Great Men are so far from detesting these Monsters, that

that they often find them better Company than other Men, and admit them into their Familiarity and Confidence; not conſidering, that by this means they become their Accomplices, and make themſelves guilty of High-Treaſon againſt the Divine Majeſty. Without theſe, forſooth, Converſations and Entertainments are dull and inſipid; Here it is they are highly countenanced and reſpected; here they are pamper'd with Dainties; and where they are moſt bound to be thankful, there it is they belch forth the blackeſt Blaſphemies. Their Sayings are received here with the greateſt applauſe, and appear ſo much the more witty, by how much the more bold they are, and attack God himſelf? Men truly the moſt ingrateful and the leaſt reaſonable of any other in the World, who

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are ready to thank themselves for all the good things they receive, seeing they acknowledge no other Cause thereof but their own Industry or good Fortune. The very Sons of the *Devil* (whose Name imply's a *Slanderer*) that would fain Signalize themselves by attempting the same thing with their Father, who did ever make it his endeavour to oppose the Truth.

VIII. But since they will acknowledge no Wit paramount to their own; perhaps 'tis by their Care and Power, that the *Earth* is counterpois'd by its own *Weight*, and surrounded with so vast an *Ocean* without being drown'd in it. Belike, 'tis by their Industry and Providence, that so solid an *Element* is pierced in so many places by such a vast number of *Canals*, springing with Waters, that quench

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the thirſt of all Living Creatures, and conſtitute Rivers ſo abounding with Fiſh, ſo Fertile and Conducive to Commerce through the whole World. 'Tis by their Order, no doubt, that the *Sun* riſes at the ſet time to enlighten them, when they are ſatisfied with Sleep; and that the *Seaſons* return to fill their Senſes with all variety of Pleaſures. Now, if in this they can't but own their Weakneſs, what folly is it in them not to grant that there are Intellects more powerful and ſublime than theirs, employ'd in theſe wonderful Operations; and that we muſt at laſt come up to and ſtop, at ſome one that is Superiour to all others, which being finite have a Beginning, and conſequently depend upon That which has none, and is Infinite? For otherwiſe, proceeding from the ſmalleſt to the greateſt

greatest, Men would endlessly pass from one Cause to another, and never find the First and Last, which alone deserves the Name of DEITY. O shame of Men, that now a-days we must be at the pains to prove a GOD! What greater affront can be put upon our Kind than to shew them that which is continually present to all their Senses? Is not this to go about to teach the Art of Seeing, to them whose Eyes are open, and that of Reason to such as profess themselves to be Men? Or shall we need to add to these Considerations their continual Repetitions, who have undertaken so high, but withal so reasonable a Defence? Indeed, if God were not, how could the World exist? Or must it be its own Workman and Workmanship, or have had a being before it was? How could both these

theſe ſtand, and yet be but one and the ſame World? Or, if it were Eternal, and Independent upon any Superiour Cauſe, that admirable Oeconomy, which cannot proceed but from an infinite Intellect, and thoſe ſtupendous Virtues which it ſeverally Communicates to all its Parts, would in ſome ſort, prove (what many have fancied) it to be a God. For what the leaſt appearance is there, that its Beauty, Order, and Duration ſhould be the effect of blind and heedleſs Chance, or that we owe to her Conduct, Prudence, and Power, ſo ſteady and well regulated a Succeſſion of Times and Motions, and that ſuch is her Wiſdom and Might, as to make Cauſes ſo remote one from another, to co-operate one and the ſelf-ſame end? After all their pains, this would be ſtill a God, though under

der another Name, and these Monstrous Blasphemers would still find in every place what their guilty Souls desire to meet no where. For, what is Fortune or Chance? but an empty Name, a Vain Idol that subsists only in our imagination, and to which we through Error attribute all Events, and the Effects of all Causes unknown to us, to whom it appears greater or lesser according as we have more or less knowledge; and if we could banish Ignorance out of the World, Fortune would be fain to pack with her. This therefore is the Deity of the Ignorant, to whom the Wise pay no Vows, nor make Offerings; and I am astonish'd how they can think they have any reason, that speak for it, since (according to their Scheme) they must believe that it is to Chance they owe their Being, and consequently

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can neither move, act, nor ſpeak, but by Chance. Others there are who would ſeem to believe a God, but are ſo ſolicitous and concern'd for his repoſe, as to take from him the Care, if not of the whole *World*, at leaſt of all *Sublunary Beings*; fancying this would be too much tronble for him, as if he ſtood in need of their Impious folly to eaſe him. Is not this to deny him, whilſt they pretend to acknowledge him, and raſhly confine the Actions of a Power that in its Nature is infinite? Is not this to frame to ones ſelf a God, that does not ſo much as perform the part of a Man, and to attribute to him an Underſtanding depriv'd of Council, a Will without Effect, and a Bounty without Communicativeneſs; and to ſay all in one Word, a Being without being, and leſs than that of the Elements, which is next to Non-Entity.

IX.

IX. For, not to insist any more upon that Universal Relation, and Concatenation of Causes and Actions, which plainly demonstrate that things Superiour stand in need of the help of those that are Inferiour, and that it necessarily depends upon the same Wisdom and Power both to make them and preserve them; Let these Gigantick Wits stand forth and tell me, Who is it that chastises *Kings* and *People* in his wrath, that removes *Scepters* from one Hand into another, that changes, as it were in an instant, the Face of *States* and *Empires*, and that (to shew it is HE that does it) fails not of denouncing it a long time before by the Mouth of his Messengers, Prophets and Ministers? Who was it that did once punish the Sins of Men with so dreadful a Deluge own'd by all Nations; and by whose Advice

was it that one ſingle Family was then ſav'd? Who is it that promiſed the like Flood ſhould never happen any more, and has ſo well kept his Promiſe? What Intellect did foreſee three or four thouſand Years before the Event, the Coming of the MESSIAS, of whom alſo Prophets did ſpeak in ſuch a manner, as one would think they had no leſs ſeen him than the Apoſtles? From whom but God himſelf, or ſome Angel ſent by him, could proceed thoſe Predictions concerning the Poſterity of *Abraham*, the Throne of *David*, and the *Lamp*, that was to be preſerved for him in his Family; the diſperſed and rejected *Jews*, and the Converted Nations? If they tell me there are Mathematicians, Aſtrologers, and Magicians, that can predict future Events, I will ſtill ask them, what Hand did write them in Hea-

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ven in such fair Characters as Men might read them? And who has put the signs of these things in the Stars, or rather the Virtues and Causes which the same Men cannot comprehend? They that are not touched with these Considerations must needs be strangely possess'd with a blind Passion that diverts their Reason to somewhat else, and makes them pass from *Custom* to *Hardness*, and from *Ignorance* to *Security*. And yet we see these Men very Wise and Prudent in Worldly Concerns; Their Ignorance and Stupidity seem only to be about Divine Matters. And I am much mistaken if most of them do not carry their Accusers and Judge in their own Bosom, who sooner or later will force them to cry out, as well as many others, *We have wearied our selves in the ways of Iniquity, and are consumed in our own Wickedness.*

CHAP. III.

X. THus, all that we ſee, ſpeaks to us of God, and convinces us of his Exiſtence. But what he is, no Objects nor any Diſcourſe of ours can ever repreſent. Yet what we know of him is ſufficient to make us believe and adore thoſe his Perfections we know not. Whether therefore the Progreſs of Cauſes and Effects be not infinite, and all things arrive or tend viſibly to their End; Whether from the Old Book, in compariſon of which all others are New, we learn the Origine of People and Nations; Whether the Virtues of Heaven grow weak, and both the Age and Strength of Man decreaſe in compariſon of what Sacred and Profane Hiſtories tell us was heretofore; it does evidently

dently appear that God has created the World, and for the Top-Stone of so many Master-pieces, he has made Man after his own Image, that is to say, wholly conformable to his Will; not by a Conformity of Essence, but of Imitation, and perfect with that degree of Perfection, which the most Noble Creature was capable of, and sufficient for his Felicity. He held a most Honourable Rank between Animals and Angels; He was, as it were, the Tye and Band of the Universe, and the Center and End of all Created Beings, over which he would have born an Eternal Sway and Command, had he but once obey'd his Creator.

XI. But being not contented with the Favours and Munificence bestow'd on him, he rashly aspires to a Dignity above the Supreme, and desirous to mount higher than

the very Top, and to ſeek (as it were) ſomething beyond Exiſtence he fell down to the loweſt Pit, and wanted but little of returning to that Nothing out of which he was made. What a preſumption and raſhneſs for Man to ſtrive to be equal to God! What incredulity to accuſe him of a Lie or of Envy! What ingratitude and rebellion to ſubſtitute the Devil in his Place! What lack of Charity, or what exceſs of Neglect towards his Children to ſell them before they were Born, and put them into Slavery before they knew what Liberty was! He little imagin'd he ſhould be thought the worſt Father in the World, and that the Curſe he had drawn upon himſelf ſhould reach from one end of the Earth to the other, and from the Beginning to the determination of all Ages, and be the moſt certain Inheritance he

ſhould

should leave to his Posterity. Neidid he foresee that instead of that Correspondence or Society he had with the Angels, and his Communion with God himself, his Unhappy Successors should only converse with Devils, under whose Tyranny they would groan continually; and that to live among Men would be to walk among Lions and Tigers, or among Vipers and Dragons: Nor that instead of an Everlasting Spring, which he had begun to enjoy, and might have transmitted to them, they should undergo the rigour of a hard Winter, or be consumed by the Sunburning and Scorching heat of Summer; and that instead of those fine Trees he beheld in the Earthly Paradise, and of the sweet Flowers and Fruits he could gather there, they shonld frequently see nothing else but Gallows and Racks, Graves

and Dead-Men's Bones. He did not foresee that besides the sweat of Labour, the misery of Want, the pain of Diseases, and the terrors of Death, there would be Judgments that should overthrow Towns and Cities, and lay waste whole Provinces; That sometimes Mortality would be so great, and the Dead themselves so dreadful, that there should be none to be found either to Mourn for, or Bury them; and that at other times Nature would be so deprav'd, as that Men would devour one another, and Children being all torn to bits and pieces should return into their own Mothers Wombs. In short, he did not foresee, that most of his Progeny would be so abominably Wicked as to persecute the most Innocent and Righteous of their Brethren rather than imitate them; That they would not content themselves

selves only to stone some, and murther others; but would be so industrious as to find out Torments whereby to oblige them to renounce the Truth, and worship Wood and Stone, or else undergo all the Cruel and Barbarous Usage that the Malice of Hell can invent. No, he did not foresee all this; and the Devil who made him believe he should have his Eyes open'd, aim'd at nothing else than quite shutting of them, that so he might precipitate him into an Abyss; whence it was not to be thought there should ever be any Power of Man or Angel capable to retrieve him.

XII. How has this Fall disfigur'd him, and what proportion or resemblance is there of what he now is to what he was before! He is ashamed of himself, and has no sight but of his Nakedness, nor

knowledge but of his Error. From the Image of God which he was, he is transformed, as it were in an inſtant, into that of the Devil; and there remains nothing in him of his priſtine Innocence, but the grief of having loſt it. Who ſhall comfort him for this Loſs, and what can he expect from his Reaſon that only ſerved to betray and undo him? How is it poſſible that he who could not keep up while he ſtood, ſhould get up again when fallen? What can he hope for either from the Angels, or God himſelf; having broken that Law whereby he was oblig'd to Obedience, or to Puniſhment? Puniſhment that is of the ſame age with the Offence, troubles and afflicts him already without intermiſſion, and he has no more Life left him, but to feel the continual ſtrokes and attacks of Death. And which is worſe, ſtill the offence is heightned

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proportionably to the Dignity of the Person offended. So that as he has sinned against him that is Infinite, so must he dye, or suffer infinitely. O what confusion of thoughts! What remorse and what fears disturb his Mind, especially considering that he had no less been informed of his Duty, than threatned with his Disgrace; and the more to quicken in him the care of his own Preservation, it seems the Sentence of Death should in some sort, as one would think, have prevented his Crime? To what despair is he reduc'd, and what can he think in this Miserable State? Save only this, that God never makes a thing, which he afterwards repents to have made; that he does not build up to pull down, and that the Glory of such a Workman will not suffer his Work to perish. That it was not likely

likely that the most Excellent of all Creatures should be appointed to Eternal Woes, and that being seduced, and the fault not wholly his own, he should be obliged to make the same Satisfaction with the Devils, which continues still, and shall never end.

XIII. Howbeit, he discover'd no Expedient for his Deliverance, and could not imagine there were any means capable of procuring him GOD's *Mercy*, without doing Violence to his *Justice*. This is what neither he, nor we his Posterity, could ever have conceiv'd: And thereupon some lull'd themselves asleep and became Atheists; others framed Gods to themselves after their own way, and fell to Idolatry. This unhappy Inclination (yet so natural and so strong that 'tis grown almost to an universal Fury) did so pervert their Senses

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and Understanding, that they would have the Objects of their Worships to be as themselves, Corporeal and Visible, and not being able to imagine any thing beyond themselves, they attributed Humane Passions to them, and appointed Services for them, according to the Vanity of their own thoughts. They not only degraded themselves beneath the nature of Man, when they paid Adoration to their own kind, but made themselves less than Beasts, by Worshipping them all. Nay, they adored the most Vile and Abject of all Creatures, that were so far from having any Ray or Mark of the Divinity, that many times they were such as had not so much as any sign of Life in them; Yea for fear lest any thing Horrid and Execrable should be wanting in their Idolatry, they worshipped the very *Infernal Powers*

Powers and Enemies of the *Creator*. Many judging well there muſt be a better ſtate for Man than that of this World, inſtead of enquiring whether there was not ſome Divine Word that could inform them of their chief End and ſupreme Good, conſulted only ambiguous and Deviliſh Oracles. Inſtead of the only and true Remedy that was able to cleanſe them from all filthineſs of Sin, they ſought for nothing but Crooked and By-ways; and therein wearied themſelves with *Ceremonies*, *Abſtinences*, *Purifications*, *Faſts*, and *Offerings*; all which had no other effect, than to add new afflictions to their Lives. For what *Sacrifices*, what *Beaſts*, what *Hecatombs*, could ever make atonement for the Tranſgreſſions of one ſingle Man? Or rather, what Man, conceiv'd as he is in Sin, could ever ſatisfie, I don't ſay for others,

others, but even for his own self? And what else could he offer in offering up of himself, but *Ingratitude*, *Envy*, *Hatred*, *Malice*, *Thoughts* of *Vanity*, and *Words* of *Falshood*? Nay, what are his very *Virtues* but disguis'd *Vices*? What is his *Prudence* but *Deceit*, his *Valour* but *Rashness*, and his *Wisdom* but *Hypocrisie*? If he prays, he does it but perfunctorily, and out of Custom; and if at any time he shews some Zeal, 'tis not so much his Love to God that excites and inflames him, as his apprehension of some Evil that he is threatned with, or the sense of that which presses him. What can he do better than to make a continual Confession of his Sins, for which, if he be judged according to his Demerits, he ought to expect nothing else but the Sentence of Death and Eternal Damnation? Therefore if all Humane Reason

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was never able to find out the means of Sanctifying so much as one single Man; nor all Philosophy to make one Believer, or discover a Good not to be snatch'd away by Death; What remains but that we should believe what the best inspired Men could best tell us, *viz.* That we must have recourse to the first Beginning; That the means was to be Universal, and that none but God could reveal it?

CHAP. IV.

XIV. 'TIS a thing most certain, That as Man was not made by Chance; so neither was he created in vain; That his End can never be either to suffer Eternal Torments, or to return to that Nothing out of which he was taken, and

and that the same Power that gave him Being, must save him. Should not he, who by the single Sparks of that Divine Image remaining in him, is able to measure the Heavens without leaving the Earth, think we be Immortal? What would else become of so many Revelations and Promises, or who is it that hath taken so much care to deceive us? What would Justice and Piety be more than vain empty Names, to cheat the World withal? And to what purpose so much Regard and Caution, if after this Life there be nothing to be hoped for? No doubt, our Natural Remisness and Sensuality would not be wanting in advising us to follow the beaten Road, to enjoy the things Present, without troubling our head with the Future, and to live like Beasts, since we must die like them? But away with

with all theſe profane and raſh Thoughts. The firſt Act of the Creator anſwers for all the reſt; and he that has made us of nothing, is as able to retrieve us from Death. Should he be contented to ſuffer his own Image to be defac'd and defam'd? Should the Devil be Conqueror in this Conteſt, and raiſe his Trophies over the Works of the Almighty? No certainly; the firſt State of Innocence was not the End of Man: How good ſoever he might be then, he was to be ſtill better, and his latter end more Bleſſed than his Beginning. But it was requiſite he ſhould be expoſed to his own deſires, and *left to the Counſel of his own hand*, as well for his Tryal, as to the end he might know himſelf, that this knowledge might be as a Step to him to raiſe him up to that of his Creator. Perhaps he would

would have thought he was capable of maintaining himself without the Help of any other Power; not reflecting that there is but one pure Holy and true Being, on whom all others do depend, and without whom either we must not be at all, or be Eternally Miserable.

XV. To the end therefore that all Men might know they are not to rely upon the strength and virtue vouchsafed them, God has given them the means to try themselves, and acknowledge that they are all of them equally fallen by the fall of One; that they are naturally the Slaves of Sin, and consequently Tributaries to Hell and Death. He gave them his Law, which how perfect soever it be, yet brings nothing to its full Perfection; whose Justice serves only to make them the more guilty, whose Instructions are but in order

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to confound them, and which ſeems not to promiſe them good things, but to make them deſpair of ever attaining them It is a Letter that kills, an intolerable Yoke, a Miniſtry of Death, which is ſo far from juſtifying Men, that it ranks them all under one and the ſame Condemnation. Or to ſpeak more favourably of it; It is a Glaſs wherein they may ſee what they were, what they are, and what they ſhall be; It is a Flower, whoſe Fruit is the greateſt Favour that can ever happen to them; It is a Candle that lightens them during the Night, till the Sun riſe upon them.

XVI. Now, as the incomprehenſible Unity, which comprehends all multiplicity, is the ſupreme Perfection of God, ſo in like manner Union with God is the ſupreme Perfection of Man. But we are not

not able to raise up our selves to him, unless he first draws us, or rather vouchsafes to come down to us. This is the Mystery of our Redemption, which even they themselves who had received the Promises of it, confirmed by so many Signs and Miracles, did see so far off, and through so many shadows and so much darkness, that they were better able to believe and hope for it, than comprehend it. Seeing the vast distance there is between Heaven and Earth, they could not think of any means to fill up their great Abyss, and were not informed there were any Steps by which they might ascend to Heaven, save only by *Jacob*'s Ladder. Yet Reason does for all that give its assent to things that happen beyond Reason it self; and helps us apprehend that at last, which at first it could not so much

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as in the leaſt make us imagine. Since therefore it teaches us that a Mean ought equally to partake of both Extremes, and doth unite them, howſoever diſagreeing they may be; that a Mediator ought to be capable of the Sentiments and Affections of both Parties he intends to reconcile, and ſet a juſt Eſtimate upon the Right or Wrong of either of them: Who doubts but that he that for this end is ſent to us from Heaven is fully poſſeſs'd of all the Qualities requiſite for him as ſuch; that he partakes of the Humane and Divine Nature; in a Word, that he is Man and God both together? Moreover, who doubts but that he is a Man conceiv'd otherwiſe than other Men, leſt his Natural Corruption and Sin ſhould make him incapable of an intimate eſſential Union with the Divine Juſtice and Purity? For

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if he were not Man, we could have no ſhare in him, neither could his ſatisfaction be imputed to us. If he were not God, he could not communicate his Immortal Virtues, Glory and Felicity to us. If he were Man only, he could not overcome Death, nor raiſe himſelf from the Grave, but ſink under the Burthen, and be ſoon reduc'd to nothing: And if he were God only, he could not have Died, nor received from himſelf that Payment to which we are bound by the Law. Therefore he muſt ſuffer, and yet be altogether incapable of Dying; he muſt die, and yet withal be Immortal too; He muſt deſcend into Hell, and come up thence again; He muſt be above all the Infernal Powers, and ſhew that to him truly belong all the ways that lead to, as well as the Iſſues from, Death. He that will

will deliver others from the Curſe, muſt undergo and overcome it; and to the end there might be ſome proportion between the Offence and the Puniſhment, there muſt be a Perſon of an infinite Worth and Excellency, to make a temporal and finite torment of infinite Merit. For certainly it is more with God that his Son dies for the Sins of the World, then to ſee all Mankind periſh together. Now, tho' there be no Law that allows the Innocent to ſuffer for the Guilty; neither is there any that forbids it, provided he offer himſelf willingly, and be not abſolutely deſtroy'd by the Puniſhment, but have power as to lay down his Life ſo to take it up again.

XVII. O the Wonders of the Eternal Power and Wiſdom, who in the Beginning was pleaſed to take out of Man a Woman that cauſed

caused us all to Die, that afterwards out of the Woman he might take a Man that will make us all alive again! Thus Humane, and Divine Nature in the fulness of time are by a stupendious Mystery united together, and without any the least alteration in the properties of either, the Son of God has joyn'd himself in Unity of Person with the Son of Man. I say the Son, and not the Father; for we cannot have him for an Intercessor, who is to be interceded with. He that does send cannot be sent; and because the Father does nothing by himself, but all things by his Son, it is reasonable that he should exert the Second Creation, who was the Author of the First. And who could speak better on our behalf, than he who is the Word it self? Who could reprint the Divine Image better in us,

than he that formed it there at firſt, or intitle us better to the right of Children, than he that poſſeſſes it in the higheſt degree? But it is not enough that he ſhould make ſatisfaction, and that this ſatisfaction ſhould be imputed to us, but he muſt alſo confer that Grace upon, and apply it to us; and this is the Office of the *Spirit*, which equally proceeds from the *Son* and the *Father*. He it is that enlightens and purifies us, that enables us to underſtand, love, and believe theſe Myſteries, that impregnates us, as he did the Bleſſed *Virgin*, and makes us conceive our *Saviour*. He is that Band of Love which unites us to the Divinity, that real Unction, wherewith we are all anointed, and thereby made Kings, Prophets and Prieſts. In ſhort, it is he that gives himſelf for a Pledge and Security of the Promiſes of the

Life

Life to come, of the Resurrection, and Glory.

XVIII. This great Mediator therefore is come, such as he was foretold, not like some great Conqueror, a *Cyrus* or an *Alexander*; but in the form of a Man full of sorrows and acquainted with griefs, like one Consecrated by suffering; to be a Propitiatory Victim for Mankind, whose Merit is sufficient for all, but appliable only to them that believe in him. He is come not to shed another's Blood, but his own, and combate *Rebellion* with *Obedience*; *Strength* with *Weakness*; *Pride* with *Humility*; This is that which makes him appear greater and more Divine; This is that which overcomes and ravishes us into admiration, and obliges us to fall down and worship him. This is the sole Object of Religion, which is not only the Art of saving

Man, but of making a *God* of him, without any the least prejudice to the Divine *Unity*, or the Holy *Trinity*. For what name can be given to the Son of Man, who makes but one and the same Person with the Son of God? And of what Extract must we esteem them to be, whom he has vouchsafed so far to honour, as to call them his Brethren? Now this RELIGION has been established not by any *Bribings*, *Companies*, or *Combinations*; not by the *Favour* of *Princes*, or the *Votes* of *People*; not by the *Subtilty* of *Philosophers*, or the *Perswasion* of *Orators*; In a word, not by a Multitude of *Men*, as the *Mahometan*, nor a great Number of *Gods*, as the *Pagan*; but only by the plain Proposal of a simple and naked *Truth*. Which *Truth* has, notwithstanding all manner of Opposition and Gain-saying, made it

ſelf to be heard throughout the World; and at its appearance has ſeen all *Errors* confounded, all *Sects* diſſipated and vaniſhing all Falſe *Oracles* ſtruck Dumb, and all *Idols* and their *Worſhippers* fall down before it.

CHAP. V.

XIX. AFter all that this RELIGION lays before us of the only Way for Man to be ſav'd, what can all the Religions in the World beſides teach us? And what can *Mahomet* pretend to perſwade us, if the Name of a *Chriſtian* be ſo odious to him, and he ſo little agree with *Chriſt*, who does ſo perfectly agree with all the *Prophets*? Is it not a wonderful thing, that ſo many Men ſhould be inſpired in ſo different

Places, and at ſo different times, to proclaim the Coming of a Man, who was to be rejected of his own, and receiv'd of all the Nations of the Earth? Certainly, after what the Scriptures tell us, and the Commands and Counſels they give us, there is no more room left for *Curioſity*, but for *Submiſſion* and *Obedience*. Let thoſe who make their own Gods appoint them what Services they pleaſe: it muſt not be ſo with him, who is not made by our Opinion, but we are all made by him: Whoſe Will cannot be manifeſted to us by Imaginations or Conjectures, but only by his own Word. This is the Light he hath given us to be our Guide, and wo to them that call that Light Darkneſs. So high and excellent is the knowledge it raiſes us to, that no man can ever be ſuppoſed to have invented it:

Beſides,

Besides it is so conformable to Reason, that 'tis impossible to consider it, and not to approve it. In the first place it discovers Man to himself, and makes him sensible of his own Weakness and Misery; but immediately comforts him again; shewing him his Distemper, only to dispose him to be presented with a Remedy for it. It contains *Revelations* and *Predictions*, which after so many Ages have been confirmed by the Events, and tend to no other end but the *Salvation* of the *Creature*, and *Glory* of the *CREATOR*. The Natural *Simplicity* and *Plainness*; the *Scope*, *Style*, *Antiquity*, *Energy*, *Duration*, and so many other *Signs* that shine in it, are so clear an *Evidence* of its being *Divine*, that it manifestly appears, that 'tis GOD himself that speaks, and consequently it behoves *Man* to give attention and be silent.

What *Hiſtory* of the greateſt and moſt flouriſhing Empires in the World, was ever confirmed by their own Friends, as this is by its Foes? What other Hiſtory beſides this, begins with the World, continues from Age to Age, ſpeaks of things to come, as if they were preſent, and ends with the World it ſelf? This is the *Way* to *Salvation*, the *Gate* of *Heaven*; and whoever enters in any other way is a *Thief* and a *Robber*. This is the *Model* of *Perfection*, that ſhews us what Good or what Evil we are capable of, and teaches us to examine, know, and reform our ſelves. This is the true *Paradiſe*, wherein the *Tree* of *Life* is to be found, the *Leaves* whereof are for the *Healing* of the *Nations*. In a Word, theſe are the ALMIGHTY's *Letters*, which he writes as well to his *Servants*, as his *Friends*, and are neither

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closed nor seal'd up to any of them, whom he has appointed *Heirs* of *Eternal Salvation.*

XX. Whosoever therefore does know, that there is a Holy Scripture for the Instruction and Information of Man in the Service he ought to pay to his God, and the Reward he may expect for it, and he is not careful to look into it, whatever shew of Religion such a one may make, he is a *Liar*, an *Hypocrite*, and a *Deceiver* of his own self; seeing it is written for the *Common People*, as well as for the *Learned*; for *Women*, as well as for *Men*; for *Children*, as well as for *Parents.* And it is a bad sign for those, who have once read it, perhaps out of Curiosity, not to be affected with the Love of it, and continually desire to read it over and over again. Is this to deal honestly and faithfully; or rather,

is it not a ſiding with Satan, and being as it were at his Wages, and taking his pay, to hinder the Salvation of Men, by forbidding the reading of it to ſo many People of good will, who thirſt after the WORD of ETERNAL LIFE? Let *Turks* and *Hereticks* hide their falſe *Doctrines* and *Errors*, as much as they pleaſe, the GOSPEL of CHRIST, which is the TRUTH it ſelf, muſt be Viſible and Communicable to all; it muſt ſhine as bright as the day, and this Spiritual Light muſt be no more hid than the Corporeal. Perhaps ſome will ſay, *We need not ſo much Reading, nor ſo much Study; has not the* Church *preſcribed whatſoever is neceſſary for us, and are not we under the Conduct of Men that cannot err?* But to this I anſwer, that there can be no greater Error than that which perſwades us we cannot err; and that this

is rashly to assume to our selves a Divine Property incommunicable to any Man, besides Prophets and Apostles; and that so far, as they are commissionated to be the Bearers of the Word they have receiv'd, and the Preachers of what has really been reveal'd to them. But perhaps, the WORD of GOD is not to be understood without the help of *Plato* or *Aristotle*? But I answer, that the Wise of this World are so much the farther from this Knowledge, because their *Wisdom* is *Folly* before GOD, and prompts them to gain-say the Holy Spirit with Obstinacy and Violence, as two Contraries are wont to do. Perhaps, 'tis but a part, or half of the Rule, and therefore not sufficient perfectly to instruct us about our *Salvation*? But say I, there is no Man so simple, nor so dull, but this will enable him to conceive more

more good things than the moſt Holy can practiſe, and there is no Saint but comes far ſhort of the Perfection it propoſes.

XXI. Methinks, I hear theſe wilfully ignorant Perſons complain of the Difficulty of a Science, about which they never made any more Enquiry, than if the Knowledge of Salvation did not at all concern them; and through a Religious, or rather, Superſtitious Scruple profeſs that they are not worthy to read it. 'Tis true, you are unworthy of the Favour that God is willing to ſhew you; but being he is pleaſed to do it, pray, who would you have to receive it for you? You ſuſpect him, and ſuppoſe his Word to be dangerous and dreadful, and that it is ſpoken or inſpir'd to no other end, but to lay Snares for Men's minds, to deceive and undo them. You know

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(say you) your own Weakness and Insufficiency; and that you would be apt to wrest or mistake the meaning of it. Say rather, you know your own Malice and Wickedness, and that you would turn that into rank Poison, which others do convert into Sweet Hony. You say that Sacred WORD is dark and obscure, whose first Words made the *Light*, that Spiritual *Lamp*, which was given us to this very end, that it might enlighten us. You hear not that Word which the very Rocks have heard, and which does not only raise the Dead, but *calls those things that are not as if they were*; which Commands things out of Nothing, and the Command is obey'd. Confess therefore that you are less sensible than Rocks, than the Dead, yea than Nothing it self. This is the proper Effect, Counsel, and Instruction,

ſtruction, of your Guides and Maſters, who at once made their own Precepts to be regarded, and the Scripture deſpiſed; whoſe Purity cannot ſerve their Ambition, and who not daring to accuſe it of Lies, have given it the bad Name, that it is dark and obſcure; and not being able openly to gain-ſay it, have put their own Senſe upon it. And though it be full of ſtrict Prohibitions of adding any thing to, or taking ought from it, yet have they not contented themſelves to lay heavy Burthens upon Conſciences, and load them with new Ceremonies and Ordinances, which make the State of the Goſpel more intolerable than that of the Law: But their inſolence and boldneſs has carried them to that exceſs, as to cut off ſome Commandments from the Law it ſelf; though one would think the Reſpect due to the

Hand

Hand of God that wrote it, ſhould have exempted it from ſuch a Sacriledge, and render'd it for ever inviolable. Theſe Men ſtudy Divinity only to oppoſe and baffle the Scripture; and ſome of them have run over their *Courſe* of *Divinity* and are admmitted *Doctors*, without ever having read it. Before they read it, they learn the Senſe of the School, and underſtand it not but by the falſe Light of Prejudice. After all this, 'tis very hard for them to admit another impreſſion, than what they have received in their Youth; And then (O Vanity, wherewith the Devil deludes Men!) thus to underſtand it, is to be thought Learned.

XXII. I Know there are Myſteries and Propheeies in it, which were not underſtood even by thoſe who delivered them, and that the Knowledge thereof was reſerved for

for them that ſhould ſee their Events. Neither is there one Paſſage threatning Men with Eternal Death, who cannot fully explain the Revelation. A Man may work out his own Salvation with leſs Difficulty, than to underſtand throughly all the Viſions of *Ezekiel* and other Prophets. Nay, I ſay further, that the Predictions, Threats, and Promiſes, the Evidence whereof neceſſarily depends upon futurity, leave certain Impreſſions and Idea's on our Minds of thoſe horrible Torments prepared for the Wicked, and of that glorious Reward and Happineſs deſigned for the Righteous. The Things we underſtand aſſure us of the Truth of thoſe we underſtand not; and when thoſe Places that are clear and evident of themſelves are not ſufficient to render the other intelligible, the Reader ought

to

to humble himself, to confess his Ignorance Indocility, and Human Presumption to stop here. But however, every one may here clearly see the *Commands* he is to obey, the *Belief* he is to hold, the *Pattern* of the *Prayers* he is to make, and *Praises* he is to return to GOD. And this indeed is all our Preachers ought to teach us, without their needing to trouble and perplex our Minds with Curious Questions, and lose both themselves and others in the Vanity of their own thoughts. But don't we run the hazard of making our selves Lyars, if in the least we seem to assert this Word to be clear and plain, when the Doctors of this Age declare the contrary, and the People believe them? Yes, indeed it is Dark, our SAVIOUR testifies it himself; but it is only so to the Worldly Wise and Learned.

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He thanks his Father, that he has hid theſe things from ſuch, and revealed them to Babes. It is obſcure to them that periſh, and whom the God of this World has blinded. So that we may confidently affirm that it cannot be apprehended by an Underſtanding meerly Human, and that it muſt be a Divine Spirit that can conceive a Divine Word. They that have not this Spirit can by no means comprehend it. None but the Children of God know the Voice of their Father; None but Sheep that of the Shepheard. True it is, and I confeſs, that its exceſſive Brightneſs makes it Dark to many that behold it, and that Noble and true Born *Eagles* only can fix their Eyes upon this Sun, the Light whereof never fails to ſtrike Owls and Bats with Blindneſs.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

XXIII. IT is not to be doubted at all but that the Enemy of God, the Author of the Universal Rebellion and Great Tyrant of the World will make himself to be ador'd in his own Kingdom, and that consequently most Religions are Worldly and Diabolical. 'Tis no matter to him by whom, or how they are instituted, whether Ignorance, Opinion, Error, or Custom introduces them, provided they be equally Superstitious and Profane, or whether those who at the first worshipped *Bel* or *Jupiter* do afterward worship the *Sun*, the *Moon* and all the *Host* of *Heaven*, nay, and that of *Hell* too. There is no Religion so extravagant or ridiculous, which he doth not favour; neither there is, any besides the True

True, that is diſpleaſing to him. He has firſt heaped Gods upon Gods, introduced their Idols even into the Holy Place, and then found out a way to combate Scripture with Scripture, and raiſed falſe Doctrines from falſe Interpretations. He has made uſe of the Light, only to dazle and blind People; and employ'd Truth, to cover and diſguiſe a Lie, the better to get off his own Impoſtures. He has his *Doctors*, through whoſe Mouths he teaches and diſputes continually. He has his *Votaries*, by whom he expoſes the Pattern of a good and devout Life: Nor doth he want his *Prieſts*, *Prophets*, *Holy Men*, or *Martyrs*. In the mean time, Men don't conſider what Spirit they are led by; And they are often harden'd and delivered up to *Satan*; yea in a manner poſſeſs'd, or at leſt blinded by him, who have quite other thoughts

thoughts of themselves. Besides they are of so presumptuous and profane a Temper, and have so good an Opinion of their Natural Reason, that they would fain reform his Works, who has formed both themselves and all things, and pass their Judgment upon the Divine Word, with as much peremptoriness, as if it were meerely Human. They are not content with what *Divinity* teaches them, they must (forsooth) call in *Philosophy* to their assistance, and so confound and corrupt both the one and the other; without perceiving that by this means they leave their Christian Vocation, and fall under the disadvantageous state of Heathens. They spend their time in examining Curious and Subtle Questions, and laying aside things that are clear, they make it their glory to raise Scruples and foment Contradictions,

dictions, to the diverting (by theſe affected Difficulties) both themſelves and others from the knowledge of Truth. Whenſoever it pleaſes them they take Figurative Expreſſions in the Literal Senſe, wreſt thoſe that are *dark* or *doubtful*, and are very dexterous in putting upon equivocal terms, a conſtruction fit for their Turn. They dazle one another's Eyes with ſpecious Arguments, and their weak Judgment ſuffers two Contradictories to appear equally probable. Indeed one would think that their Learning ſerves only to make them more Ignorant, and their Study to accompliſh them in the Art of doubting of every thing; thereby making *Learning* worſe than *Ignorance*, they are all *Scepticks* by Profeſſion, and *Chriſtians* only by Name.

XXIV. In-

XXIV. Indeed, if there were any certainty in Human Learning, they who presume to be so accomplish'd in the Art of Reasoning should all agree. But if their Opinions be so various and different, when yet there is but one TRUTH, what does their Science amount to? Their Learning consists in a kind of *Divinity*, that is meerly artificial, intricate, thorny, and all full of Quiddities, Instances, Relations and Formalities; which neither the Prophets, nor the Apostles, ever thought necessary to Salvation, or rather were never acquainted with them; and it were much better for us to be so too (after their Examples) than to know them. They are learned in Human Inventions, Chimæra's, ridiculous Fancies, and in every thing that is apt to advance Error, and confound Reason by its own Subtilty. All

Places

Places ſwarm with vain Bablers, everlaſting Diſputers, who employ their whole ſtudy in the art of gain-ſaying; that let a Man ſay what he will, they may always be ready to contradict him, and are more allarm'd with a falſe *Syllogiſm*, than they are concerned for the *Peace* of the *Church*, or the *Happineſs* of *Mankind*. They never come to any Conferences with intent of yielding any thing for the love of Truth, but only to try whether they can gain their Adverſaries by Perſwaſions and Promiſes, or ſupplant them by all manner of Sophiſtry and cunning Devices. They dread nothing more than to grant one Point, leſt they ſhould be oblig'd to grant them all; and if any one of them ſhould chance to yield never ſo ſmall a matter, this would preſently ruin his Credit among thoſe of his own Party, and the leaſt

least act of sincerity would be accounted a crime unpardonable. Wherefore they resort to those Meetings, well provided with all manner of *School-Stratagems*, *Arguments*, and *Instances*, grounded upon certain *Axioms*, or *Maxims* of their own, or others contrivance, and constrain all to submit to them, as to Principles of Sovereign Truth, that neither admit of doubts, nor need any evidencing, and on which depends the infallible Consequence of what they themselves believe, or would fain perswade others. Yea, though their Frauds be discover'd, yet they have still some colour at hand to make them look plausible, and so by a pious Cheat keep the People in their impious Devotions. They are dexterous at taking their advantage. They have the Art of eluding the most formal Allegations: They Wire-

draw the knot of the matter, the ſtate of the Queſtion. They have their Sophiſtical Diſtinctions, their ſet Gloſſes, their Sleights and Evaſions at their Fingers end; and in Diſputes, as well as in Combates, their ſole intent is to come off Victors. Curſed Wretches! who prefer their own Honour and Intereſt to that of Religion it ſelf, and who being more ſolicitous about what they muſt object or anſwer, than what they ſhould believe, are very little concern'd for their want of *Faith*, provided they do not ſeem to want *Reaſon*. How can we expect, that theſe Men ſhould faithfully explain to us Things dark and abſtruſe, whoſe whole buſineſs it is to darken thoſe that are the moſt clear, and ſo much change the Ordinances of God, that there needs no point of Wit to perceive it; Common ſenſe and

and Eye-sight being sufficient to make one a competent judge of it? No other fruits can be look'd for either from their Animosity or Hard-heartedness, which render them sociable only to such as are willing to be instructed in their way, or abandon themselves to their Guidance. For as for themselves, they are no more capable of learning any thing; because they presume they have learn'd all; and so proposing to themselves nothing else but the teaching of others, no wonder if they had rather pass for *Masters* of *Error*, than *Disciples* of *Truth*.

XXV. But I hear them already demanding of me, Whether in a matter of this importance, I may without too much presumption, pretend my Opinion or Judgment to be infallible, or at least better informed, than that of the Doctors

themselves? To which I answer, That I will have no other, but that which the most clear and intelligible Words of the Scripture do obviously afford to the most simple among the People, and which God is pleased to reveal to the humble, and hide from the proud. I will have no other, than that which teaches me, 1 *Cor.* 4. 6. *That none ought to presume to know beyond what is Written*; That it is absolutely forbidden either to add to, or take from it; and that they in vain make profession of honouring God, who honour him only with the Doctrines of Men, and make void his *Law* by their *Tradition*. I will have no other, than that which commands me to avoid profane Questions, vain Disputations, and tedious Contradictions of a Science, falsly so call'd, which one cannot follow, without erring from the Faith, and aban-

abandoning one's self to Impiety. I further answer, That such Questions ought not in justice to be ask'd of those who make use of their Senses and Reason only to discern the Voice of their Lord and Father, to receive his Commands and obey him; who do not rashly mix their own Fancies with his Ordinances, and who do not explain the Scripture, but by it self. 'Tis from the exorbitant Curiosity and sublime Visions of these inlightened, *Angelical* and *Seraphick* Doctors, that so many extravagant Opinions arise, and not from the innocent Reading of those poor and simple Creatures, that in the Word of Eternal Life seek for nothing else, but a Light to guide them in the Way to Conversion and Salvation. None ever were the Authors of Heresie, but such as presume themselves able to defend

it, and who with the same Spirit of Pride and Rashness, wherewith they have started it, are resolved to maintain it. These are Errors, which none but the Learned are capable of, and Follies that none but Wise Men can commit. The vanity of knowing what others know not, of being esteemed the Author of some Novelty, of giving a Name to a Sect, and being the Ring-leader of it; the Dread of Poverty, Thirst after Riches and Honours, the Desire of pleasing Great Men, of deserving their Favours, flattering their Passions, promoting their Interests, and thereby advancing their own: These are the Secret Articles and chief Mysteries of their *Faith*. They are very willing to quit the Pretensions of the Soul for the Ease of the Body. They are for a Religion that may insure them a Fortune, and a Conscience that

that may yield to Necessity. In the mean time, an Error is no sooner hatcht, but there are always some ready to receive and embrace it; and that not out of any Devotion, but from a design of forming a new Party, and raising Troubles and Divisions in a peaceable State. Whole *Europe* is all bedappl'd with Sects, and as it were rent to pieces by the Violence of so many Factions; at the sight whereof *Atheists* encrease, *Mahometans* are confirmed in their Error, *Jews* are scandaliz'd, and all equally harden'd. There is no end of Questions; Sometimes about the *Elect*, and at other times about the *Reprobate*. But who are those rash Persons, that seek for a Reason, where so great an Apostle as St. *Paul* finds no other but the good Will and Pleasure of God? For my part, I confess I cannot won-

der enough at them, who with ſo much ingratitude deſpiſe thoſe things, which God has been pleaſed to make known to us, that they may raſhly dive into thoſe, which for a time he would have hid from us. Without too indiſcreet a preſumption, and a Curioſity not only needleſs, but pernicious, I ſhall never diſturb the publick Peace, nor raiſe new Doubts, either about the two *Natures*, the two *Wills*, or *Subſtance* of JESUS CHRIST, and without a too great Love of my ſelf, I ſhall never pretend to be the COMFORTER with *Montanus*, nor the SAVIOUR of Men, with *Menander*. I will live as a *Believer* with *Believers*, and neither ſcandalize my Brethren by any private Opinion, taken up of my own head, nor by a general undervaluing of the Opinion of others.

XXVI.

XXVI. So long as the Weakneſs of Men ſhall introduce into the Church no other Scruples, ſave about the difference of Meat, and have no other Ornaments but Pictures, and not provoke God's Jealouſie by Graven Images. So long as there ſhall be only ſome ſuperfluous Ceremonies, which in the Judgment of many will paſs ſometimes for indifferent, and at other times be thought neceſſary; though indeed an Error, that ſeems but ſmall at firſt, is commonly a ſtep to a greater. So long as its Purity ſhall be, if not altogether ſuch as it might be wiſh'd, yet at leaſt ſuch as is tolerable; I will not depart from its Communion. But I muſt and will withdraw from any Aſſembly, where I ſhall be forced to conform with the outward actions of Superſtition and Idolatry, and pay a Religious Honour and Worſhip,

not only to Saints and Angels, who are Fellow-Servants with us, but to Wood and Stone; where the Sacraments are not entire, and where the Commandments of God are made void by the Precepts of Men. Neither ſhall I think this is any Schiſm, where there is ſo juſt a reaſon of Separating, and an impoſſibility of doing otherwiſe. For what elſe ſhould be the meaning or uſe of theſe Words, that command Believers *to go without the Camp*, Heb. 13. 13. and to come *out of Babylon*, Rev. 18. 4. which going out is not meant of the Spirit only, but of the Body too, ſeeing that both are equally to be conſecrated to the Glory of the Creator? And when we ſhall ſee *the abomination of Deſolation ſet in the Holy Place*, Dan. 9. 27. muſt not we *fly into the Mountains*, Mat. 24. Or if once Antichriſt be ſeated in the Temple of God, muſt

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he therefore be obey'd, and what he pleaſeth to injoyn, be called, *the Commandments of the Church?*

CHAP. VII.

XXVII. WHen therefore I ſaw the univerſal Diviſion of ſo many Sects, which all of them had their Doctors, and ſome of them their Prophets too, I thought, that upon this account the neceſſity of Prayer was very urgent, that there was great occaſion for us to humble our ſelves, and conſult, not the uncertain Imaginations of Men, but thoſe infallible Rules which God himſelf has laid down. And this I deſired with ſo much the more care to do, becauſe the Word of God tells us, that not only many *Antichriſts* will ariſe in the Church, and one above all

all the reſt, but alſo that in the time of the Apoſtles themſelves *the Myſtery of Iniquity* began already to put forward, and conſequently muſt be by this time grown to a great height, notwithſtanding their blindneſs, who have no minds to ſee it, and think they are ſafe enough whilſt they can find ſome pretence or other for their wilful ignorance. I therefore ſuſpected all Religions, which are not purely Evangelical and Divine, which are mixt with Human Inventions, meddle with Queſtions too high, and too difficult to be reſolved, and the Controverſy whereof is too ſubtle, and fine-ſpun. I had alſo an ill Opinion of thoſe, that are brought in by the Sword and Tyranny, which are ſo little aſſur'd of themſelves, that they are afraid of a Communication with others, and to that end keep their Follow-

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ers in a Brutiſh Ignorance. In like manner I miſtruſted all thoſe, that comport with the ſeveral intereſts of the World, and put in for a ſhare in its Government, whatever pompous Title of the Church they may aſſume; becauſe they overthrow the Order of CHRIST's own Appointment, and raſhly change that into a *Time* of *Glory*, which is appointed for the *Patience* of the *Saints*.

XXVIII. Beſides, if we will believe univerſal Experience; Every thing that is under the Government of Men is like them, ſubject to Alteration, Mutability, and Corruption, and ſoon or late follows the Way of their Inconſtancy. Children do not willingly continue in their Fathers, or at leaſt Anceſtors Belief; and Faith is not hereditary, as the Title of a Family or an Eſtate is. For the moſt part they

they have nothing left of it, but an outward Profeſſion, to which they being no otherwiſe engaged but by Birth or Cuſtom, they eaſily abandon what their depraved Nature neither incline them to know, or love; ſo that if they have begun with good and ſound Doctrine, a bad one is their Portion at laſt. Thus we ſee that the purity of the Goſpel, whereſoever it hath been received, has been ſeldom tranſmitted to the third Generation: and the Apoſtles were yet alive, when in the very Churches they had planted, Error crept in inſenſibly into the room of Truth. God threaten'd them already with the removal of their Candleſtick; giving them to underſtand, that Faith was no more the peculiar Priviledge of any one Place, Family, or People, and that the Church being become Univerſal, could not

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be subjected to the Jurisdiction of one King only, or the Administration of one single Priest. 'Tis in vain for Men to pretend to lay the Foundation of a permanent State, or to find a Supreme Good here in this Life; They are not able to bear Prosperity long, and the surest way to undo them, is to grant them their desires. If our first Parents, thongh in the State of Innocency, could not among the Flowers and Fruits of a most pleasant and delightful Garden resist the suggestion of the *Evil Spirit*, who to tempt them, took no other Form, than that of a *Serpent*, nor offer'd any thing but an *Apple*; how is it possible for those who are Sinners by Nature to withstand him, especially when he transforms himself into an *Angel* of *Light*, and offers them all the advantages their Hearts can desire? It is indeed in a Paradise

of

of Pleaſures, that the Devil, for the moſt part, tempts Men, to precipitate them into Hell; and on the other hand, it is in a Hell of Sorrows and Afflictions, that God trys them in order to raiſe them up to the Glory of Paradiſe. Riches are ſo hurtful to thoſe that poſſeſs them, that like a heavy Burthen, they hinder them from mounting up to Heaven. And ſo incompatible are they with the Profeſſion of the Goſpel, that even he to whom they all belong, and who could uſe them without the leaſt abuſe, did of his own accord become *Poor*, that he might trace us the way of *Eternal Salvation*, and by his *Poverty* we might be made *Rich*. Indeed, all good Men do acknowledge what is confirmed by Hiſtories, *viz.* That the Bountiful Donations of Emperors, and the free Gifts of Lords and Ladies have proved

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the most dangerous Poison, that could ever have been handed to the Church; That from that time Piety began to grow cold, and make room for the Cares of this World, and that all Christian Virtues were soon choak'd by great Plenty and Luxury. All those great Benefactors, who are so extremely commended to us, plainly shew'd, that they were not throughly informed of the Will of our SAVIOUR, nor of the true Calling of his Ministers, when they thus inriched them with Temporal Estates, and made of them so many Members and Favourers of the Kingdom of this World. This great Wealth that flow'd in upon them, all on a Sudden, was but an ill omen to the Faithful, who easily judged that for the future none but the Ambitious, Covetous, Wicked, and Profligate could aspire

to

to any Office in the Church, and that ſhe was going to be reduced to that extream Miſery, as not to be governed by any, but by her worſt Enemies.

XXIX. From that time, the Corruption has (by a ſtrange Permiſſion of Heaven) grown to this height, that the *Clergy* are grown worſe than the *Laity*. They have received from Men that Authority, which in their ſtation they ſhould receive from none but God, and if they have taken any care about Spiritual Things, it was not to *ſerve*, but to *command*, to advance themſelves to the Higheſt Dignities, and to be made *Biſhops* over other *Biſhops*. They have imitated him, who deſpiſing a Common Joy with the other Angels, had the boldneſs to attempt the raiſing himſelf to the higheſt Pitch of Singularity and Superiority, ſaying in his Heart,

Heart, *I will ſet up my Throne above the Stars, and be like the Moſt High.* Inſtead of confining themſelves to the Obſervation of that true Service, which God had inſtitued and preſcribed himſelf, they have deſpiſed its Simplicity, would not away with any Devotions, but ſuch as were Pompous and Dazling, or if you'l have it in their own Words, they have *hallowed the Ceremonies of Paganiſm*, by admitting them into the Church. They could not endure the Purity of the Goſpel-Doctrine, without adulterating and diſguiſing it a thouſand ways; and to that end, have choſen Doctors and Teachers after their own fancies: They have ſtarted ſubtle Queſtions, which they that teach or preach them, often underſtand no better, than their Auditors, however full of ſenſe they may appear, when utter'd from an eloquent

Eloquent Mouth, wherewith both the one and the other ſeem equally ſatisfied. We have ſeen wretched Worms, that were but a while ſince come out of the Duſt, and ready to return to it again, have the inſolence to aſſume the Title of God, and dare to command Angels, as their Uſhers, and diſpoſe of Heaven and Hell, as if they were their own Demain. But indeed, what likelihood is there for them to be the infallible Truſtees of God's Will, and the juſt Umpires of the Faith of the World, who owe their Promotion only to Bought Voices, Bribes, Corruptions, Promiſes, Threats, Factious Combinations, Contracts, and Confederacies? What Patience would not be tired, to ſee ſuch, as are ſway'd by no other Spirit, than that of ſelf-intereſt, who make of the *Church* a *Houſe* of *Merchandiſe*, and

a *Den* of *Thieves*, should yet be steel'd to that excess of Impiety, as to render the Holy Ghost not an Accomplice, but a Principal in their Crimes? Now if after all the Credit they have in Heaven, they would shew themselves a little less concerned for their Earthly Self, perhaps one might doubt, whether their Authority did not (as they pretend it does) run parallel with the Divine. But as they are like Lions for cruelty and violence, so are they like Leeches for Covetousness; and there is no end of their new Contrivances for the alluring of Men to make vast Contributions to the insatiable Idol they Worship. For to pass by so many *Excommunications*, *Interdictions*, *Evocations*, *Appeals*, *Suits*, and *Exactions*, under the pretext of supporting a War against the Enemies of *Christendom*. There is no end with

their

their *Reverſions* of *Benefices*, *Firſt Fruits*, *Bulls*, *Indulgences*, *Canons*, *Caſes* of *Conſcience*, *Pardons*, *Remiſſions*, both of *Guilt* and *Puniſhment*, and *Supererogatory Satisfactions*. All which Inventions make not Sins *Venial*, except it be by making them *Venal*; they expoſe Prayers, Sacraments, Heaven, and God himſelf to ſale, and proſtitute them to the higheſt Bidder. Horrid Inventions! that turn *Simon Peter* into a *Simon Magus*, and make, as far as in them lies, a *Tyrant* of *Chriſt*, and *Hirelings* and *Brokers* of his *Apoſtles!* What a goodly Divinity is this! That all, who have wherewith to pay, how heinous ſoever their Sins be, may be in a moment, deliver'd from the pains of Hell, or at leaſt from thoſe of Purgatory; which others muſt ſwelter through for ſome thouſands of Years, unleſs perhaps, *Poverty*, voluntary, or per force;

force; *Fastings*, to that excess as to be their own Murtherers; *Nakedness*, *Hair-Cloth* and *Scourges* do retrieve them thence! But besides this Spiritual Merchandizing and Selling of every thing that is Sacred; by what Divine Inspiration are they authoriz'd to absolve Men from their Oaths of Allegiance, and discharge them of their Obedience and Duty to their Lawful Kings and Princes, whom they rather endeavour to terrifie with their Thunderbolts, than to make them truly devout? or can that horrid and abominable Inquisition, which makes them stop their Ears to the just Remonstrances of those that long for a Reformation, be called an Imitation of the *Tenderness* and *Bowels* of our SAVIOUR, and not rather of the *Cruelty* of *Herod*, who caused so many Innocent Babes to be be put to Death, for fear only

ly of miſſing Him who was Innocence it ſelf.

XXX. O GOD! how long wilt thou bear with the Uſurpation of the Children of Pride, to whom Religion ſerves but for a Cloak and a Pretext, and who make uſe of thy Name only to entice people to give more willingly? How long wilt thou ſuffer that horrid Scandal, which on their account thoſe Nations do receive, with whom there ſtill remains at leaſt ſome Shadow of Reſpect for that Law thou didſt pronounce thy ſelf; and who ſeeing the Objects of thy Jealouſie, thoſe Images ſet up in Churches, thoſe Feſtivals appointed in honour of them, and that Religious Service paid to them, fancy all this is done by the command of thy CHRIST, and that *Chriſtians* do indeed Worſhip as many *Men* and *Women*, as the Heathens

Heathens ever did *Gods* and *Goddesses*! How long wilt thou forbear destroying with the Breath of thy Mouth, all those who with so much insolence and hypocrisie thus impose upon the People by their juggling Delusions, which both *Jews* and *Atheists* flock to see, that they may discover the cheat of them, and be confirmed in their aversion to that Religion that endeavours to justifie and maintain it self by such lying Miracles! For redress of which abuses there is no other way but to apply our selves to thy Supream Power; for it is in vain for us to think of working upon such as will not be cur'd of the good Opinion they have taken up of themselves, who think they are so well endowed by Heaven, that they excell all others in Common Sense, that they have no Conceptions but what are the Dictates

of Reaſon, nor no impreſſions but what they have received from the Mouth of Truth. If the *Pagans* did ſo ſtrongly oppoſe the Goſpel, and the Knowledge of the TRUE GOD, when preached to them, who had no other *Gods* but ſuch as Men had made, what reſiſtance may not we expect from them who aſſume to themſelves GOD's own *Authority*, who think they are in poſſeſſion of all Right and Power both Divine and Humane, who imagine that from henceforth to the end of the World, all Might is given them in Heaven and on Earth, and who under the Name of the *Church*, make all manner of Errors to be applauded, and put off their Cheats and Impoſtures without either fear or ſhame? Princes, who could at firſt have prevented thoſe Abuſes, tolerated them, through what irreligious Pru-

Prudence I know not; whether it was that they wanted Light to discern them, or that the Cares of the World, and of their Estates obliged them to dissemble their knowledge, or whether they were in some sort forced to yield to the Decree of Heaven, and could not but in vain oppose themselves against the fulfilling of what the Prophets had foretold. Prophecies which having long since represented things to us just as now we see them, render so many Doctors inexcusable, who through fear or hope held their Peace, and with a faithless and unaccountable Silence strengthned that which they might have weakned by a just Contradiction and Opposition; Nay, they have been observed to be the most industrious in the Defence of that Error, which they could once have buried under an Eternal Condemnation.

CHAP. VIII.

XXXI. THere is no *Tyrant* that makes himſelf to be better obey'd than *Cuſtom*, eſpecially in *Religion*: It is ſo much the more abſolute, by how much the more it influences and engages the Conſcience, and out of fear of doing amiſs, obliges them to continue that homage they have begun to pay to it. Which plainly ſhews that notwithſtanding the preſumption that attends Men, and the good Opinion they have of their own Wit, they are for all that for the moſt part ſo weak by Nature, that one would take their Soul not to be derived from Heaven, but purely Animal, and to have no other Form, than that which Inſtruction has given it. They are ſo much byaſs'd by their Birth, Education,

cation, and Company, that the first that possesses them carries them away, and does not give them leave to believe any thing but what they have been once perswaded of. Therefore I have, as much as in me lies, separated my self from my self, that is to say, from those impressions I had received in my Youth; I have consider'd them, as foreign and remote, that so, *Truth* might be the sole Object of my *Faith*, and that *Custom* in me might exercise no *Tyranny* over my *Reason*. Besides I always considered that none could say he really was a Man, who suffer'd himself to be carried away with the Stream of the World, who was not in some measure above the Councils that were given him, and had so little courage as not to make use of his own Judgment, but yielded it a Slave to Common

Errors. Yet as moſt Men approve nothing but what they have been us'd to and judge of every thing according as Cuſtom has render'd it familiar to them; ſo whenever they have contracted any ill habit, the Remedy is extreamly difficult; becauſe the Faculties are ſeized, and it muſt be a powerful Endeavour that can deliver them from it. They grow up and are formed with certain *Impreſſions*, which become ſo con-natural to them, that they make up the chief part of their *Reaſon*; They have been taught no other *Science*; they underſtand no other *Language*, and unleſs they be *born again*, or have their *Nature* chang'd, they cannot alter their *Belief*. They do not perceive that inſtead of ſtanding up for the *Truth*, they undertake the Defence of the firſt Opinion, they have receiv'd, without examining whether it be as

true

true as it is favourable, and whether it be not grounded upon meer Prejudices, ſpecious Pretences, Likelihoods, Conjectures, and Worldly Conſiderations. They don't obſerve that all Sects pretend the ſame Advantages, that all Hereſies have their Followers, who defend them with a like Zeal, and have their Doctors, who think themſelves no ways inferior to others, whether in Point of Judgment or Learning. They do not perceive that they are ſmoothly carried away by the ſtream of Self-Love, which perſwades them that they are very different from others of their kind; that they can penetrate things better, and that they enjoy the Divine Light, whilſt others have ſcarcely that which is Humane. According to their ſaying, there is nothing ſo true, nothing ſo eaſie to comprehend, as

that which they believe; the Proof of it is clear and evident, the Demonſtration certain and infallible, and he that does not underſtand it, can underſtand nothing at all: Reaſon is always on their ſide, and Error and Obſtinacy the portion of their Adverſaries. What Blind Fury, what Madneſs, what Preſumption hinders them from perceiving that thoſe they are ſo much aſtoniſh'd at, look upon them with equal aſtoniſhment; that they appear ridiculous to them they laugh at, and that they for whom they make but a ſhew of pity, are really and in good earneſt moved with pity towards them? Should not they, conſidering the uncertainty of things, and the miſerable condition of Man's Mind, have recourſe to univerſal Maxims, and ſtand firm to the Ordinances of the Supream Law-

Law-giver, who expresly ferbids to depart therefrom, and turn either to the Right or to the Left?

XXXII. But so far are they prepossess'd with what the World offers to them, and the Cares of this Life have so blinded their Judgment, that they will not enquire about any Principle, nor judge that neither Space of Time, nor Priviledge of Places, nor any manner of Considerations whatsoever can give any prescription against *Truth*. Besides this, they are perswaded of their Parents Faith; by Domestick Examples, by the Numbers, and by Antiquity it self; which may be attributed to an Error that has insensibly crept-in, and by process of time taken encrease, and at length grown to such a height and power, that those Enemies who have ventur'd to oppose it, have been bruis'd or crush'd

by it. It is a hard thing, without doubt, for a Man to pronounce a Sentence of Condemnation against his own Country and Prince; against his Ancestors, Parents, and Friends, and against his own Teachers; But the case here is to rid and undeceive ones self of the Errors of all Human Imaginations; to justifie the *Truth* against the false Testimonies of so many Enemies; to cure the diseases of a Dying Life; to seek one Sovereign Good and Felicity, and to assent to his Word, who says, *That whosoever loves Father or Mother, or any thing else more than him, is not worthy of him.* But for all this they are resolved to follow the Examples of so many Honest Men they alledge; not considering that the *Turks* can at least say as much; that the *Pagans* could say yet more; and they had rather keep

to

to thoſe ill choſen Principles, than examine the beſt Doctrine that can be propoſed to them. Beſides, they are, as it were, liſted and made Slaves, to live and dye under the Tyranny of certain Leaders, who pretend they cannot err, and ſay, that they have the Spirit of God aſſiſting in their Conſiſtories, and directing them in all their Deciſions; that they are the Commiſſioners of a Sovereign Court, and over and above this, know how to reconcile Religion with the Advantages and Pleaſures of this World. This is a thing they eaſily ſuffer themſelves to be perſwaded of, as being more agreeable to their humour, and ſubſervient to their Deſigns. They gladly lend an ear to Calumny; take delight to ſee them convinc'd of *Error*, who ſpeak for the *Truth*, which indeed they ſuſpect, and dare not ſo much

much as caſt an Eye towards it, leſt being taken with its tranſcendent Beauty, they ſhould be oblig'd to follow it, and undergo ſome juſt ſeverities aud hardſhips, which their wilful Humours could never yield to. They are willingly ignorant of thoſe Maxims, they have no mind to practice, as finding ſome kind of quiet in this *Ignorance*; and are loath to receive a *Law*, how juſt ſoever it be, that may force their *Liberty*. For, the truth is, that Afflictions make up a great part of the Profeſſion of the Goſpel, is enough to deter Worldly Men from it. They had rather yield to the ſwift Stream that carries them along, than to row againſt it; They had rather be drouſing in a ſweet Sleep full of pleaſant Dreams, than hear their troubleſome Voice, who awake them only to afflict them. O brutiſh ſtupidity!

pidity! O visible Obstinacy! What? must then *Vices* and *Errors*, that are grown Publick, lose their Name, and acquire that of *Virtue* and *Wisdom*? and must *Custom* have so much Power over Men, as to hinder them from being reasonable Creatures? But who doubts but that those who are by the Scripture said to be Drunk, are so far depriv'd of their Senses and Judgment, as to take *Falshood* for *Truth*, and not to perceive what their Eyes see? Who doubts but that they are like those People, who had so used themselves to *Poison*, that at last it served them instead of *Food*?

XXXIII. In the mean time they have reduced all Religion to Human Traditions, and Superstitions; Neither Reason nor Understanding are once call'd in to give their Verdict in the case; and I do not know

know by what Error, or how it is come to paſs, that moſt Men, who are curious of all other *Sciences*, do not ſo much as inquire into *that* which is the moſt neceſſary. They, with the *Barbarians*, have no other *Knowledge* of GOD, but ſuch as is obſcure, idle, empty, fruitleſs, and dead; and had they been born among the *Turks*, they would have been of the ſame Belief with them, having nothing but an Acquired Faith, that depends only upon Tradition, which never ſaved any Man. This Faith they have in common, both with the Devils and wicked Men, who (as well as they) confeſs that God is Almighty; that he has created the World and ſent his Son, the whole Myſtery of whoſe Birth, Life, and Death they believe, and yet muſt not pretend to have any ſhare in his Kingdom and Glory. It is a thing that deſerves

ſerves both our Pity, and our Horror, to ſee the indiſcreet zeal of a People, who pray they know not what; who feed themſelves with Shews, and ſuffer themſelves to be led away by ſuch Teachers as make them thirſt more after their Neighbour's Blood, than his Salvation. A People impoſed upon, and deluded with vain Things, who fancy God is better pleaſed in one Place than in another, and who go to ſeek among Strangers what they might as well find in the midſt of themſelves. An ignorant and unthinking People, that without conſidering what they do, under the Goſpel revive *Judaiſm*, in direct oppoſition to the Word, which ſaith, *That the hour is come when the true Worſhippers ſhall worſhip the Father in Spirit and in Truth.* What can Places or Pilgrimages conduce to this? Or all thoſe Religious Ser-

Services, which are valued only for their Number, not for their Quality, and the performance whereof is impoſed neither out of Piety, nor Faith, but as certain Tasks they put upon themſelves, and certain Numbers which they attribute ſome Virtue to, and do affect, much after the ſame manner as Magicians do? Devotions full of Superſtition, Scruples, and Jealouſies, as of Men that are afraid to know the Truth, and to whom the Light is hurtful, who conceive nothing of the true Religion but what is told them by the very Enemies of it, who can entertain nothing better for it than hatred and calumny; always repreſenting it in the moſt hideous ſhape they can imagine. Indeed, it is an eaſie matter to perſwade them any thing, who have already been perſwaded to that blind Obedience, to which they

they give their consent with as much Unmanliness and Senselessness, as if they should say, *I will be stupid, I will be sensible of nothing.* For if once they say they will follow the Church, they contradict themselves, and own that they will follow what they know. Now how many things must a Man know to be able to discern the false Church from the true? To what purpose is Blind Obedience in them whom God has endu'd with Reason, and after that given them his Ordinances with an express Command to Parents *to teach their Children the same*, and to all, *to search the Scriptures*, which alone plainly shew the *Way* to the *Kingdom* of *Heaven*? But how should those instruct others, who are so ill instructed themselves, who for a just Punishment for worshipping things inanimate, are struck with such a prodigious

digious hardneſs, that to ask them for Advice or Anſwers, would be the ſame as to conſult Marble.

XXXIV. Ye Blind, don't you perceive that you loſe your Senſes only by applying your ſelves too much to things inſenſible? Don't you ſee that Reaſon it ſelf makes you inferior to the Object of your Adoration, and that your wicked inclinations have made you leſs then the Work of your own hands? O ye Fools, leave *Puppets* and *Babies* for Children; they are ridiculous for an Age that can exert *Reaſon.* Ye are no leſs guilty than the Atheiſts; for with them you annihilate the Deity, when you fix the form thereof to any Matter whatſoever, and when you repreſent Him, who is a Spirit by a piece of Wood or Stone, notwithſtanding that he has ſaid, with ſo much jealouſie, *To what will ye liken me?*

Thus

Thus you rashly make him that has made you, and through an unaccountable insolence and ingratitude, you seem to endeavour to render him ridiculous, by giving him Eyes that cannot see, Ears that cannot hear, Hands that cannot handle, and Feet that cannot walk. Perhaps you think your good Intention will be an Excuse for your Ignorance; You go as you are led, and whatever you do, you believe you do God Service, even when you afflict the Faithful, and put them to Death. Ye Hypocrites, know that numerous Abuses are ready to croud in under the pretence of Good Intentions, which, if they be not grounded upon the Word of God, are but so many Sins. Thus the Children of *Israel* justly under-went the Punishment due to their Rashness, who whilst they were worshipping the Golden Calf, thought

thought they did celebrate a Solemn Feaſt to the Lord. Thus *Nadab* and *Abihu* ſtir'd up God's Anger, and the Fire that conſumed them, though they had no other Intention but to offer up Perfumes and Incenſe to him. Thus *Uzzah* was immediately ſtruck Dead for having ſtretched forth his hand to the Ark, which ſeemed ready to fall; though he had no other deſign than to keep it up. If good Intentions only are ſufficient to juſtifie Men, the *Jews*, Enemies of CHRIST, were not guilty; St. *Paul* giving them this Teſtimony, *Rom.*10.2. *That they had the zeal of God.* By this means, that is, upon the account of Good Intentions, many unjuſt Sentences might be juſtified, many Murthers and Maſſacres ranked among Pious Works; all Religions might bring us to Heaven, and almoſt all Men would be ſaved.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

XXXV. THerefore in an Exerciſe or Practice, wherein Men have received ſufficient Inſtructions and inviolable Orders, 'tis in vain for them to alledge or pretend Good Intentions, which can have no place but in Obedience. There is no need of ſeeking for new Counſels or Advice in a matter in which there is neither doubts nor danger, and wherein the ableſt Profeſſors and Maſters have no other Authority than to cauſe Men carefully to obſerve the Divine Ordinances; And in this Senſe it is, that the Church cannot err. So that they who deceive both themſelves and others with theſe vain Excuſes, are as ſo many Hypocrites that never did ſeriouſly ſet their Hearts upon Heavenly

venly Things, aiming at nothing elſe but to make an advantage of the Trade and Commerce of the World. I have conſidered them under all their Circumſtances; and whether it be becauſe the Scripture has foretold it, or Experience confirm'd it, I find that Great Men have ſeldom any ſenſe of true Piety in them, that they ſuffer themſelves to be carried away more by Faction than by Reaſon, and like no Counſels better than ſuch as are favourable to their Worldly Ends. They make uſe of Religion as a Cloak to their boundleſs Ambition, and many conſpire againſt their own Princes or the Government, and are hatching Helliſh Deſigns under the ſpecious Pretence of propagating (forſooth) the Catholick Faith. From their very infancy they have thoſe that puff them up with Pride, and egg them on

to

to a false Generosity. They are rarely entertain'd with any discourse about the Knowledge of God; unless it be at a Sermon, which they never frequent but with reluctancy and impatience; They look upon their Conversation as rude, uncouth, and tedious, who speak to them of Religion and Salvation. They have no Desire for that they know not; or if any one of them pretend to have some glimpse of that knowledge, they are only Surmises and Probabilities, wherewith they fill their heads, and perswade themselves that things are really so as their Passion makes them to fancy. It were rashness to contradict them: for being possess'd of Fortune and Power, they think they cannot want Sense and Reason; They joyn Authority to their Opinion, and pronounce Sentences from which there

there is no Appeal. They can hardly abide any Company, but ſuch as indulge their Self-Love, nor any Diſcourſes that do not flatter their humours and idle imaginations. They are altogether vain in their Words and Thoughts; they ſuffer themſelves to be deluded only with outward Show and Appearances, and to that Degree pleaſe themſelves with looks and colours, that they would reject the beſt things in the World, if they were convey'd to them by weak or mean Inſtruments. They would never have received the Law from the Mouth of *Moſes*, becauſe of his impediment in his Speech. Truth muſt be preſented to them in a fine Dreſs, and ſumptuouſly adorned, that is with the artifice of Lies, and unleſs a Man be Eloquent, and his diſcourſe Floriſh'd, he muſt never think to perſwade them

them any thing, were it a Commission from God himself. Who if at any time he thinks fit to send his Messengers to them, and they be taken from the meanest of the People, from among Shepheards and Fishermen, they will pass the same Judgment upon them, as the *Pharisees* did on the Apostles, whom they look'd upon as worse than abominable, and the very off-scouring of Men, if they do not proceed to stone and murther, or to imprison and banish them.

XXXVI. There is in the World a seeming Wisdom, which is nothing else but an habit of making Faces, and a refin'd piece of Hypocrisie, by which Men deceive one another, so that their whole Life is but a continual *Masquerade* or *Comedy*, where every one personates another than himself, and affects nothing more than to ap-

pear what he is not. This incurable Phrenzy, to which they give the Name of *Prudentials*, does ſo much diſturb their Underſtanding, and feed them with ſo many fancies and Chimæra's, that it renders them incapable of apprehending any Divine Truth. They only buſie and concern themſelves about things that are periſhable, not conſidering that they heap up Riches only for ſuch as will one day ſquander them away, and are covetous only to make Prodigals and Luxurious. What Parents are theſe, who whether they indulge their Children at home, or ſend them to a Monaſtry, ſeem equally to have reſolved their Ruin, who for fear of wanting wherewith to pamper the Vanity of thoſe they keep with them, rob the other of their lawful Inheritance, and before they know what Luſt or Con-

tinence

tinence is, under pretence of devoting them to God, inhumanely sacrifice them to their ambitious Avarice! O Degenerate Prudence! which makes the Mind become a Slave to the Body! Which makes Men only dexterous to shun their Sovereign Good! How ingenious to destroy, and cunning to deceive themselves! It was this, made our First Parents forfeit the Blessed State they enjoy'd in Paradise, and which by making Man fancy a thousand Ways of ordering his Life, has filled the World with impious Superstitions, Idolatries, Sects, Heresies, and Religions. This is it that has persecuted the *Saints*, crucified our SAVIOUR, and used all its endeavours for the Advancement and Defence of several *Antichrists*, whose Kingdom was to be of this World. It is this Prudence, falsly so called, that continually

reſiſts and contradicts the Holy Ghoſt, and is ſo daring as to diſpenſe contrary to the expreſs Word of God, either by wreſting the Meaning of it, or leaving out ſome Expreſſions, where they cannot be ſo well alter'd and diſguis'd, as not to appear quite oppoſite to it. In ſhort, it is this Prudence, that has the Art of making every thing ſuit with its own intereſt, which ſeeing the Divine Service perform'd in an unknown Tongue (whereby People are kept in ignorance) Prayers diverted from the Creator to the Creature, Images carried upon Men's Shoulders, and celebrated with Hymns, and many ſuch like or worſe actions, would fain make them paſs for ſlight inconveniencies, or things altogether indifferent.

XXXVII.

XXXVII. Of all the Hypocrites in the World, they are the most dangerous, who cover themselves with the Cloak of Religion, because none can with more ease impose upon others than those that make profession of Holiness, and who have the vogue of never deceiving any. Some of them appear of a sweet and mild Temper, and others are as severe: but all of them equally endeavour to put a gloss on their own Virtue. If their seeming Sweetness betrays us, their Severity despises us, and the high esteem they have for themselves, makes them have but a very mean one for their Neighbours. They have got the art of appearing for a while what their Profession and Character oblige them to be. But this forced Good Nature and affected Condescension lasts no longer than their Interests and O-

pinions are not thwarted. For though they ſeem to be very tame, yet they cannot play the Counterfeits long, for Nature damm'd up will at laſt take its courſe with more violence; If you do provoke them never ſo little, they will diſcover thoſe Lions and Tigers they kept hidden under an Human Figure; and, if you will believe them, their Anger is the pure effect of Right Reaſon, and their Crimes are more juſt than the beſt Actions of other Men. If Men think them to be Saints, they eaſily believe themſelves ſuch, and lay claim to the Title as the true Reward of their falſe Devotion. Indeed this Shadow of Piety, or rather, Flaſhing Zeal has often ſurpriz'd me, till I conſider'd that all Nations have their *Zealots*, and that ours cannot equal the Voluntary Auſterity of the *Cynicks*, *Pythagoreans*, *Hierophantes*, or *Gymnoſophiſts*.

sophists. And there is, besides, this difference between them, that those miserable Heathens worshipp'd *Daemons*, as they would be worshipp'd; but these worship the True God, in a way directly opposite to his Commands. Moreover, who knows upon what grounds Men resolve for Devotion; whether it be not from some Natural Inclination, which they have in common with the Barbarians and Infidels, or out of Pride and Ambition, as if the State and Publick Affairs stood in need of their Religion and Honesty? None of them will do a Virtuous Action for Virtues sake; they have all By-ends, and those whom the fear of Punishment cannot keep in their Duty, are restrain'd by the Hope of Riches and Honours. Many of them have the patience to dissemble their Malice, till they have

compaſs'd their Deſigns; but when they can mount no higher, and want neither Votes nor Favour to give them a further Lift, they diſcover it. To arrive to this pitch they employ all manner of artifice. They talk like Saints, write good Books, and preach ſome Truths; and have often forc'd me to expoſtulate, *Who has put the Divine Word into the Mouths of theſe Men, and made us alſo in our Days find* Saul *among the Prophets?* I have with care and attention heard their Sermons, which want neither Common Places, profound Thoughts, nor Tragical Paſſions, more fit for the *Stage* than the *Pulpit*, nor any of all the Colours that the Art of moving and pleaſing can contribute to them: But whatever good Leſſons they may mix with them, they ſtill keep firm to their rotten Foundation; and foraſmuch as they

they have no other aim but of obtaining Benefices, trucking them for others, and heaping Dignities upon Dignities, they preach *Christ* out of ſtrife and emulation only, and bear witneſs to him much like thoſe evil Spirits, who confeſs'd that he was the Son of God, and were no ſooner come out of one Body but preſently begg'd leave to go into others. And as if it were but a ſmall thing for them to diſguiſe themſelves to Men, even to the diſſembling of their very diſſimulation, they make Profeſſion of a manifeſt and publick Hypocriſie toward God: For ſo I call that outſide and ſhow-worſhip, that painted Devotion, by which People are amaz'd with the eying of *Geſtures*, hearing of *Sounds*, and pronouncing of *Words*, they do not at all underſtand.

XXXVIII. Yet we ſee with what earneſtneſs they briſtle up for the Defence of what they know not, and are willing to be ſtill ignorant of. They are charmed with a ſeeming Good; and true Religion appears to them but a poor cold thing, in compariſon of the more gay and pompous Myſteries of Superſtition. Wretched Superſtition! which makes it ſelf to be follow'd with Paſſion, or rather Fury, by ſo many weak Minds and ſilly Women, that are called Devout, and are exactly of the ſame Nature with thoſe that could not be quiet till they had ſtirred up a Sedition againſt thoſe two Holy Apoſtles *Paul* and *Barnabas*. They frame to themſelves a very difficult God, whom nothing can ſatisfie, and with whom one has never done: From whence ariſe their raſh Vows, Pilgrimages, Prayers

ers delivered in Tale, and everlasting Repititions. They spend more time in the Church, than in their Houses, whither they never return but to grieve and vex their Families, and never shew themselves merry amongst them, but when they submit to their humours, and consent to their covetous Fasts. Under a shew of great Piety they make way for themselves into the Courts of Kings, and the greatest and richest Houses, where some desire them, and others suffer them, many are troubled with them, complain of them, defie them, and look upon them as the worst of the World, and the best judgments commonly afford them the worst testimony. They see well enough that they are ignorant, of little judgment, and timorous, full of Jealousies, Doubts, and Scruples; that upon very slight occasions.

occaſions they are ſometimes raviſhed into admiration, and at other times ſeiz'd with horror: That they are eaſily provoked, the leaſt thing troubles and diſquiets them, and are amaz'd at any Event above their capacity. Every thing is to them a proof of what they have a mind to believe, and Legerdemain, Juggling Tricks, Slights, and Deluſions are by them look'd upon as true Miracles. You may perſwade them what you will about things of remote Countries, and make them eſteem Traſh for the greateſt Rarities: They often revere that upon the faith of an Impoſtor, which was gathered on their own Mountains, or found on their Shores, as if it came from Mount *Libanus*, from the Banks of the River *Jordan*, or from the moſt Sacred Places of *Paleſtina*. Sure Mount *Calvary* muſt be quite levell'd

vell'd by this time, or at leaſt is nothing but Earth and Duſt; all the Stones even to the leaſt Pebbles, having been pick'd up long ſince for Holy Things and Relicks, to adorn the *Oratories* of an infinite Number of Virgins, who would think they gave but a very ill proof of their good Education, if they did not ſhew themſelves more Superſtitious than their Mothers.

XXXIX. All theſe abuſes are well enough known to many, who for all that cannot hinder themſelves either from condemning, or from following them; and whoſe *Works* give their *Words* the Lye. For if any Weakneſs keep them back, and they deſire to be ſecret Diſciples of JESUS CHRIST, why don't they contribute to the relief of the poor Members of his Church? Or, if they cannot yet make any great ſhew of their zeal, why (at (leaſt

leaſt) do they not take care that their Idolatry may not appear at all? But preſs them a little upon this Point, and you will make the Venom guſh out. They preſently fall into a paſſion, grow very angry, and uſe the Authority they have of impoſing Silence; and diſcover their Hypocriſy. *You are* (ſay they) *not above an hundred years ſtanding; You are Schiſmaticks; Why did you leave the Church?* But the Fops ſhould add, *You will not worſhip that which is lifted up at the Altar, nor believe that a piece of Bread is made your God. You will not proſtrate your ſelves before the Likeneſs of any thing that is in Heaven above, or on the Earth beneath; and you are ſcandalized at the Submiſſion of thoſe People who run a whoring after Shrines and Images with Hymns of Devotion and Praiſe. You are ſo preſumptuous, as that you will needs receive the Sacrament whole, and*

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in both kinds, according to CHRIST's Inſtitution, *and are not contented with that ſhare thereof which the* Church *has thought ſufficient for you. You will underſtand the* Word *which* GOD *directs to you, the* Prayers *you put up, and the whole* Service *you are bound to render to him. In a word, you will not ſubmit your ſelves to the Authority of the Learned, the Examples of Magiſtrates and Princes, and will allow nothing to Tradition or Cuſtom.* Certainly theſe Men muſt believe that Religion conſiſts in the Succeſſion of Perſons, and not in the Doctrine of the Goſpel. I can think no other of them but that they do not know Truth, but by meer human reaſoning, and that they have no manner of Zeal either for this or that Party; but follow that which they find the moſt convenient for them, and have never minded the Word, which rejects

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the *Lukewarm*, and ranks the *Fearful*, the *Murtherers*, and *Adulterers*, under the ſame Condemnation. Here I am forced to confeſs my own weakneſs in accuſing theirs, and to own that ſometimes I look upon them with pity; at other times with anger; and then again with indifference. But I can hardly ſee without horror, the *Apoſtates* from the Faith; the moſt wicked of all Men, the very expreſs Images of him that is the Head of all *Apoſtacy*. Theſe are they who betray their own Brethren, make a Trade of their Revolt, ſcandalize a whole People, and think more of growing rich, than of ſaving their own Souls. Do but give them the Bag, and they will ſide with you as *Judas* did, (who like them) was not ſenſible that his Sale of his Maſter, was the purchaſe of his own deſpair. As they never had a

good

good will, ſo they neglected to inform themſelves, when they made an outward Profeſſion of the True Religion; and they are no ſooner turn'd, but they immediately ſtart up great Diſputants, grow troubleſome with their Queſtions, and ſubtle in maintaining their Change. To which purpoſe they make uſe of all the reaſons in the World, though they know in their Conſcience they have no other for it but the weakneſs of their Judgment, the perverſeneſs of their Nature, and the difficulty of reconciling their *Pride* and *Avarice* with the *Reproach* and *Poverty* of JESUS CHRIST: Beſides, the Promiſes of Great Perſons, and their gracious looks carry, I do not know what Charms with them, from which it is hard to defend ones ſelf. On theſe occaſions mean and mercenary Minds ſurrender themſelves, in a manner, without

without any reſiſtance, and their baſtardly Spirits can hold out no longer, when courted by thoſe who uſed to command them; and when their Maſters turn their Flatterers. In ſhort, the greateſt part of Men ſeems to be born for Slavery; neither is there any ſo hard, but they will yield to, nay, and preſer it too before the Liberty of Chriſt, ſo their Chains be but of Gold. They are always ready to pay their Adoration to them that make them rich, or confer Honours upon them; and with the Heathen know no other *Gods* but their *Benefactors*.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

XL. AMong ſo many bewitched or ſick Minds; among ſo many wilful Blind and vile Slaves of this World, I have been ſeeking for ſome, in whom I might diſcover ſome Purity of Conſcience, and ſome Teſtimony of their Election, and with whom I might joyn my ſelf in that Spiritual Communion and Bond of Perfection that makes them to be inſeparable from their Creator and Neighbours. For what Comfort could I reap from thoſe Favourers and Favourites of this World, in whoſe Company a Man is oblig'd, by I don't know what prepoſterous Good Manners, ever to hold his Tongue about Religion; and who either diſcourſe not at all of Divine Matters, or if they do, it is in a meer

meer human way? What ſweetneſs could I reap from their Friendſhip whoſe heart was not united to mine in what ſhould be the chief end of our Hopes and Deſires? I wiſhed I could diſcern the Children of Heaven, from the Children of the Earth; and the meeting with a *Believer* was to me as if I had ſeen the face of an *Angel*. But amidſt ſo many Men I have often laboured (but in vain) to find out one Man only, though I was not ſo clear ſighted as *Elias*, 1 *Kings*, 19. 10, 14, 18. who did not ſee one ſingle perſon in all *Iſrael*, though indeed there were a great many. My lot is fallen in an Age where Men are already degenerated from that former Simplicity and new Reformation, and wherein thoſe that bear the Name of *Reformed*, with large ſteps purſue the ſame ways with thoſe who have deſtroy'd

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the most flourishing Churches. I saw among them the same Licentiousness in Words and Actions, the same superfluity in their Dress and Habits, and the same Luxury, which heretofore scandaliz'd *Julian* the Emperor, and confirmed him in his Apostacy. *Iniquity was so encreased that the Charity of many waxed cold*: *Mat.* 24. 12. And by what appear'd outwardly I could not see any difference between the *False* Christians and those that were *True*.

XLI. These I could no where better look for, than in the most lawful Assemblies; but I could not discern the Church in the Church it self. She does not stand in need of those whose Devotion chiefly consists of Gestures and Wry-faces, who never find a Sermon too long, nor a Communion too frequent, and to whom Religion would seem too cold, if it had not something

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of the Zeal of Superſtition. She does but too much abound with ſuch as ſerve only to make up a Number, and ſeem to be engaged therein more by their Birth or Chance, than by any deſire or affection they have of improving themſelves in the knowledge of Truth. One would think they only come to ſee the World in a Place from whence the World ſhould in ſome ſort, be baniſhed, where they behave themſelves with ſo little reſpect, that it would be a great miſtake to call them Hypocrites, in whom not the leaſt ſign of Zeal or Devotion is to be obſerved. They aim at nothing elſe but to make a ſhew in the moſt conſpicuous Places; whereas they ſhould return thanks to God that he allows them any in the Company of the Saints; and it ſhould ſuffice them (without pretending

tending to any other advantage) to have only so much room there as they need to put both knees to the ground. Some make of the Day of Rest a day of trouble, and perform the most just Duty in the World, as a toilsom and tedious Task. Others are so abominably wicked and profligate, as to hear Sermons, with no other intent than to find fault with them, and wrest the meaning, or make a mock of the Preacher. Many cannot relish plain, pure, easie, and rational Exhortations; and no Truth can move them, unless it be presented to them in a pleasing Elocution, a thundering Voice, and eloquent Tongue; and unless it be adorned with all the Flowers of Rhetorick. They slight those things that are plain and obvious, and think that below them, which the common sort are able to apprehend. You

cannot

cannot ſatisfie them, unleſs you undertake ſome high Myſtery, fathom the great Deeps, or wire-draw ſome difficult Point or other, that only belongs to God to reſolve, and the knowledge whereof he has reſerved to himſelf. They have forgotten, That as he who *has choſen the weak things of the World to confound the mighty*, 1 *Cor.* 1. 27. was humble, ſo he will have our Knowledge to be modeſt, and not preſumptuous; that he has put his Word into the Mouths of the ſimple, who yet cannot expreſs it ſo weakly, but that they that love it, will know how to diſcern it from the flaſh and glittering outſide of Lie. They have forgot that he doth not willingly employ the skill of ſo many Languages, but to harden thoſe, to whom he has ſo often offer'd his Grace, and they as often rejected it, to maintain

tain Error with an obstinacy, which they will have pass for strength, and may be call'd the Constancy and Virtue of Reprobates. True Believers, in order to their being perswaded, need not the Ministry of Eloquence; which indeed is seldom introduced into the Church, but upon the Decay of Faith; and when so much Art is used for moving Men, and stirring them up to Piety, 'tis a visible mark of the hardness of their Hearts. Yet the Preachers are oblig'd in compliance with the itching Ears and nice Palates of their Hearers, to become nice and over-curious themselves, and leave the Simplicity of the Apostles to betake themselves sometimes to the subtleties of Philosophers, and at other times to to the lofty Terms of Orators. Censure is no longer of use in these cases, no more than for the cor-

rupt Manners of the Great Men of the World; and many Evils have got ſuch footing in moſt Churches already, that very few can be found who have either courage or ſtrength to remove them. The Saints in our Days have much ado to reſiſt the torrent of the Age, and the Devil makes him ſelf inſenſibly to be honoured in the Perſons of the Mighty.

XLII. I Found therefore no Reformation but in the Doctrine, yet doubted not but that there were Believers, where I ſaw the Word of Truth was preach'd. But it was ſo much the more difficult for me to know them, becauſe the *Wicked* have all the *Actions* of the *Good*, and the *Good* all the *Infirmities* of the *Wicked*. Very few are found who always take care that their Works ſhould be ſo conformable to the Precepts of the Goſpel, as not to be ſometimes

times diverted by other Promises and to pursue other Hopes. Besides, God calls them in each Sex, Age, and Profession; He invites them to him, that persecute him; and of his greatest Foes (when he pleases) makes his most faithful Friends. Yea, and by a Judgment, the causes whereof are unsearchable, he in an instant converts them who lead an ill Life, and prefers them before those whose Manners seem to be perfectly good and holy, and who do even boast that they have fulfilled the Law. Certainly the most Righteous do but fall too often, either through an extraordinary Fear, or a Surprize of Satan, or by a Trial from God himself, who for a while abandons them to the weakness of their own Nature, that they may not misdeem themselves, nor impute that to their own Virtue,

which is the meer Product of the Heavenly Grace in them. But with theſe the Gift of God is always the ſtrongeſt; ſo that notwithſtanding the Sinful Pleaſures whereby they are over-taken, and the Errors that carry them away, it happens to them as to the Prodigal Son; They muſt ſoon or late return to their Father. However 'tis not by any compoſed or demure Looks, nor any peculiar Garb they are to be known: They do not affect to appear otherwiſe than other Men, nor recommend themſelves by any extravagant or unuſual Form: All their Actions have nothing common with thoſe of Hypocrites; Their Devotion ſerves not for a Cloak to their Covetouſneſs; nor their Humility for a Mask to their Ambition: They put on no diſguiſe; nor is there any alteration to be ſeen outwardly in their

their Countenances, but such as really proceeds from an inward feeling. God affords them of those supernatural things which Worldlings cannot be sensible of. When once the Holy Ghost has touched them, there always remains in them a certain Character and impression that makes them shine in the sight of the Almighty, as the Stars in the Night, which yet have no other Light but what is communicated to them from the Sun. He that made, and is the Searcher of all Hearts does both know them, and make them known to whom he pleases. But many there are that seem to be Believers, who are not so indeed, or at the best have but a temporal Faith. Nevertheless, if we may be allowed to pass any Judgment upon it, methinks Men's Conversation shews their Affecti-

ons plain enough. And I am confident that those who do love God with a true heart, are for the most part, taken up with the Contemplation of his Works, and above all, with the Meditation of his Sacred Word: in the reading of which they continually exercise themselves, not out of meer curiosity, nor to find fault with it; neither out of a vain desire of Learning, nor as Mercenaries, to teach it to others, and make a Gain of it, but only to instruct themselves, seek for Comfort, strengthen their Faith, and assure their Hopes. They have it always in their Mouths, or in their Thoughts, and their greatest trouble is, that they cannot impart it to those who mistrust it, and keep themselves as industriously from it, as they would from a Snare, who fear it as much as the Singing of Mermaids, and whose

whose abominable Wickedness makes them incompatible with its Purity. A Spirit of discerning is a Gift, so few are blessed with, that none but the true Elect know how or what to choose, none but they that are truly Spiritual know how *to try all things, and hold fast that which is good*, 1 Thess. 5. 21. They are not disturbed that so many false Prophets, who rashly assume the Name of God; boast themselves to be the Dispensers of his Word, make it serve their wicked ends, and explain it as the Devil did, when he was so daring as to tempt the Son of God himself, as he still does those who make it their profession to follow him.

XLIII. In short, the Hurries and Intrigues of the World, are none of their Concerns; they slight them, and for that reason,

are ſlighted too; Nay, they are not only vilified and contemned upon this account; but hated and perſecuted, as if their manner of Living, as well as their Belief, was a Reproach to that of others. They do not willingly engage themſelves in any Party, unleſs the Service of God, or the Good of their own Country obliges them thereto: And if they are called to any Office or Dignity, 'tis not in their Nature to canvas, give bribes, or uſe any underhand-dealings to obtain Mens Votes or Favours for it. Neither is it their Practice to encreaſe their Wealth to the prejudice of Faith and Charity. Theſe Common Sayings, *To get an Eſtate, To make one's Fortune, To raiſe one's Family*, are none of their uſual Talk; tho' indeed their Ambition may be ſaid to be greater than that of others, foraſmuch as no Worldly Grandeur can

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ſet bounds to it. They are not ignorant what the lawful uſe of Things is, nor what Advantages, Decency and Neceſſity allow them who are poſſeſſed of Honours and great Places. But they do not underſtand, for whom they labour, who never grow weary of heaping up Riches, who raiſe ſuch high ſtructures, undertake ſo vaſt deſigns, that they can never expect to live long enough to ſee the end of them. They think no Man can be call'd Judicious or Rational, but he that ſeriouſly applys himſelf to the knowledge of his Supream Good; and they look with pity upon the miſerable Occupations of them that are as much ty'd to the Earth, as if they had no Pretenſions at all to Heaven. They behold with grief and horror the inſolence of thoſe, who deny nothing to their Senſes or Appetites, and

make no other uſe of their Riches and Power, than to commit all manner of crimes, and to tyranize over their Neighbours with the more freedom and impunity. They withdraw themſelves, as far as they can, from the converſation of the Wicked, and as they are no flatterers, ſo is their company leſs pleaſing to others. They cannot without great reluctancy, be complaiſant to ſuch whoſe Manners are diſpleaſing to them, or to give their approbation to ſo many Errors and Vanities. They cannot admire that which God condemns, nor afford a pleaſant look to thoſe Objects that grieve their Hearts. But notwithſtanding all the conſtraint and uneaſineſs they ſuffer in this troubleſome commerce, and the great averſion they have for theſe things, yet is their ſeverity always leſs than their Charity,

rity. Under pretence of forsaking the World, they do not defraud their lawful Heirs, neither do they strive to grow rich by the ruin of others; they know they should be worse than Publicans, did they not take care of their own Families, and that, according to the Divine Rule, *They that will not work must not feed*, 2. Thess. 3. 10. Upon which account, Working Days are no less welcome, than the Day of Rest is Sacred to them. But they are so far from minding nothing else but their Temporal Concerns, that they will ever and anon cry out with their Master, *Lo I come, I delight to do thy will, O my God*, Psal. 40. 9. And though they live, or rather languish in this World, as being out of their own Element; though they are, as it were, alone in the midst of a Multitude, and as *Strangers to their Mothers Children*;

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though their Purity and Holineſs be accounted Fooliſhneſs, and their Strength look'd upon as Weakneſs in them, yet that does not give them the leaſt trouble; they are very little concerned to ſee themſelves *Evil ſpoken of for well doing*, 1 Pet. 3. 17, and to loſe their *Credit*, provided they keep but their *Conſciences*. They know very well that if they would be Men-Pleaſers, they could not be God's Servants; That it is impoſſible to believe in him, and at the ſame time be ſo eager in the purſuit of the glory of the World, which moſt infallibly becomes bitter to them, to whom *Chriſt* begins to be Sweet. They are well aware, that this Life is but a Paſſage, a Place of Trial, or rather a Field of Battle, where ſuch as will not fight ought to expect neither Honour nor Reward.

XLiV.

XLIV. Now, how to reconcile the Learning of so many Doctors, with their obduration in this Case, I am quite at a loss: I cannot Imagine how they can think of the Gospel, and never think of their own Conscience; I am astonished that so much Light as they have, should not oblige them to know themselves, and cry out, *Certainly we are in Error; and our Profession is quite contrary to that of* Christ *and his Apostles. It is Written,* that all those who will live godlily in *Christ Jesus* shall suffer Persecution; *Where is the Persecution we suffer? We are the Darlings and Favourites of the World; both Princes and People are for us; We enjoy the pleasures of the Earth, and our lot falls always in the best place.* If this be not the Kingdom of this World, pray tell me what is? "Shall we cast into this "account the Vows of Poverty,

"Fastings,

" Faſtings, Auſterities, and Mor-
" tifications of ſome of our own
" Party? But ſo far are they from
" being blamed, hated, or perſecu-
" ted therefore, that they are ho-
" noured of Men, and ſo receive
" their reward: And after all, theſe
" voluntary Afflictions are of Hu-
" man Invention, and of the Na-
" ture of thoſe concerning which
" the Scripture thus expoſtulates
" with Men, *Who has required theſe things at your hand?* Iſa. 1. 12. Indeed I am aſtoniſhed that the Phariſees of this Age do not ſometimes reflect upon theſe Matters, ſince Affliction is ſo certainly annex'd to the Profeſſion of True Chriſtianity, that I doubt whether they may be ſaid to have once begun to be Chriſtians, who were never perſecuted. For if in ſome Countries in the World, the Bleſſing of Heaven, which perhaps

favours

favours the zeal of some Generation, suffers Religion to flourish, and (as the Scripture speaks) *possess the Gates of her Enemies*, Gen. 22. 17. and 24. 60; presently Abuses and Insolence, that are commonly the Attendants of Prosperity, the Practices of the Devil and his Emissaries, are apt to alter and corrupt her, and inspire her with an emulation of Worldly Religions, and a Contempt of her Primitive Simplicity. Would we have the Servants greater than their Master, and partake of his Consolation and Glory, and not of his Sufferings and Patience? No, no, they must find Joy in the midst of Sorrows, and be as a Rose among thorns: And the same must happen to them as befell *Joseph*, who was made greater by his Exile, and whole Elevation was from a Dungeon; and as *Job*, whole

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whoſe Youth was renew'd through Affliction. They ought with St. *Paul*, to look upon it as a ſingular favour, *That unto them it is given in the behalf of Chriſt, not only to believe on him, but alſo to ſuffer for his ſake*, Ph.1.29. and ſtill think their ſufferings are very ſmall in compariſon of what they hope for. *Hope* and *Charity* are the inſeparable Companions of *Faith*; all three together conſtitute a Believer, and are the infallible Characters by which he is known. I don't mean that Faith that is obſcure, blind, weak and ſtaggering, which depends upon Birth, Opinion, Cuſtom, and Tradition, which is always doubtful and apt to be ſcandaliz'd at every thing, which does not mortifie the Affections, nor forſake the World, is a ſtranger to Self-denial, and ſinks under Perſecutions. I do not mean that

that Faith which does not follow *Christ* but for its own convenience, and which, of all his Miracles, chiefly eyes that which multiply's the Loaves. But I speak of a Faith that is clear, certain, and constant, which proceeds from the Virtue of the Holy Spirit, from the Word of Eternal Life, from Prayer and Humility; which is not acquired but revealed, and which does not enter the hearts of those that have but a Human Faith. I speak of that Faith that rids us of the Cares of transitory things, that ravishes us into an admiration of the Divine Graces, that surpasses all human discourse and reasoning, and engages us to glorifie Him who gave it us, *with groans that cannot be uttered*, Rom. 8. 26.

WHICH

WHICH *Precious Gift* the FATHER of MERCIES vouchſafe to us all through JESUS CHRIST Our Lord.

AMEN.

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